CALEB WRIGHT

A STORY OF THE WEST

JOHN HABBERTON

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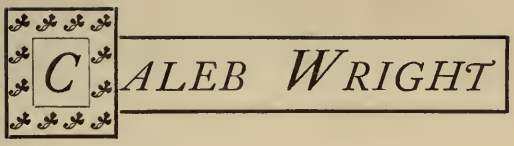
CALEB WRIGHT

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CALEB WRIGHT

A STORY OF THE WEST

BY
JOHN HABBERTON
Author of
"HELEN'S BABIES"
"THE JERICHO ROAD"
ETC.

BOSTON
LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY

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Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood, Mass.

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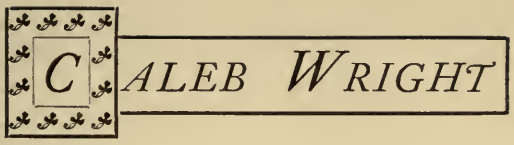
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I — THEIR FORTUNE

II

ALL people who have more taste than money are as one in the conviction that people with less money than taste suffer more keenly day by day, week by week, year by year, than any other class of human beings.

Of this kind of sufferer was Philip Somerton, a young man who had strayed from a far-western country town to New York to develop his individuality and make his fortune, but especially to enjoy the facilities which a great city offers (as every one knows, except the impecunious persons who have tried it) to all whose hearts hunger for whatever is beautiful, refining, and also enjoyable.

To some extent Philip had succeeded, for he quickly adapted himself to his new surroundings; and as he was intelligent, industrious, and

of good habits, he soon secured a clerkship which enabled him to pay for food, shelter, and clothing, and still have money enough for occasional books and music and theatre tickets, and to purchase a few articles of a class over which the art editor of Philip's favorite morning newspaper raved delightfully by the column. Several years later he was still more fortunate; for he met Grace Brymme, a handsome young woman who had quite as much intelligence and taste as he, and who, like Philip, had been reared in a country town. That in New York she was a saleswoman in a great shop called a "department store" was not in the least to her discredit; for she was an orphan, and poor, and with too much respect to allow herself to be supported by relatives as poor as she, or to be "married off" for the sole purpose of securing a home. When Philip declared his love and blamed himself for having formed so strong an attachment before he had become financially able to support a wife in the style to which his sweetheart's refinement and cleverness entitled her, the young woman, who was quite as deep in love as he, replied that in so

large a city no one knew the affairs of inconspicuous people, so there was no reason why they should not marry, and she retain her business position and salary under the only name by which her employers and business associates would know her, and together they would earn a modest competence against the glorious by and by.

So they married, and told only their relatives, none of whom was in New York, and out of business hours the couple occupied a small apartment and a large section of Paradise, and together they enjoyed plays and concerts and pictures and books and bric-à-brac as they had never imagined possible when they were single; and when there was nothing special in the outer world to hold their attention they enjoyed each other as only warm-hearted and adaptive married people can.

But marriage has no end of unforeseen mysteries for people who really love each other, and some of these obtruded themselves unexpectedly upon Philip and Grace, and gave the young people some serious moments, hours, and days. At first these disturbers were repelled

temporarily by gales of kisses and caresses, but afterwards Grace's warm brown eyes would look deeper than they habitually were, and Philip would feel as if he had lost the power of speech. It was merely that each wished to be more and do more for the sake of the other. Philip knew that Grace was the sweetest, handsomest, cleverest, noblest woman in the world, and that the world at large had the right to know it. Grace thought Philip competent to illumine any social circle, and to become a leader among men; but how was the world to know of it while he and she were compelled to remain buried alive in a city in which no one knew his next-door neighbor except by sight? In her native village deserving young men frequently became partners of their employers, but Philip assured her that in New York no such recognition could be expected. The best he could hope for was to retain his position, be slowly promoted, and some day rank with the highest clerks.

One evening Philip, who ordinarily reached home later than his wife, stood in the door of the apartment when Grace appeared. He quieted the young woman with a rapturous

smile, and said, with much lover-like punctuation: —

"All of our troubles are ended, dear girl. We can live as we wish, and buy everything we wish. To-night — at once, if you like — we can afford to tell the whole world that we are no longer a mere clerk and a saleswoman."

Grace at once looked more radiant than her husband had ever seen her; she exclaimed: —

"Oh, Phil! Tell me all about it! Quick!"

"I will, my dear, if you'll loosen your arms — or one of them — for a moment, so that I can get my hand into my pocket. I've inherited old Uncle Jethro's property. I don't know how much it amounts to, but he was a well-to-do country merchant, and here's a single check, on account, for a thousand dollars."

"Phil!" exclaimed Grace, placing her hands on her husband's face and pushing it gently backward, while her cheeks glowed, and her lips parted, and her eyes seemed to melt.

"That makes me far happier than I was," said Phil, "though I didn't suppose that could be possible. Your face is outdoing itself. I

didn't suppose money could make so great a difference in it."

"'Tisn't the money," Grace replied slowly, "and yet, I suppose it is. But we won't reason about it now. We can do what we most wish — tell the world that we're married; for that, I'd gladly have become a beggar. But do tell me all about it."

Philip placed his wife in an easy chair, took a letter from his pocket, and said: —

"I suppose this will explain all more quickly than I could tell it. 'Tis a lawyer's letter. Listen: —

"'PHILIP SOMERTON, ESQ., —

"'DEAR SIR: We are charged to inform you that your uncle, Jethro Somerton, died a few days ago, and made you the sole beneficiary of his will, on condition that you at once proceed to Claybanks, and assume charge of the general store and other business interests that were his, and that you provide for his clerk, Caleb Wright, for the remainder of said Wright's natural life, and to the satisfaction of the said Wright. In the event of any of these stipulations not being met, the entire property is to

be divided among several (specified) benevolent associations, subject to a life annuity to Caleb Wright, and you are to retire from the business without taking any of the proceeds.

"'By the terms of the will we are instructed, (through your late uncle's local attorney) to send you the enclosed check for One Thousand ($1000) Dollars, to provide for the expenses of your trip to Claybanks, and to enable you to procure such things as you may wish to take with you, the Claybanks stores not being stocked with a view to the trade of city people; but our bank will defer payment of the same until we are in receipt of enclosed acknowledgment, duly signed before a notary public, of your acceptance under the terms of your uncle's will, a copy of which we enclose.

"'Yours truly,

"'TRACE & STUBB,

"'*For counsel of Jethro Somerton, deceased.*'"

"How strange!" murmured Grace, who seemed to be in a brown study.

"Is that all it is?" asked Phil.

"No, you silly dear; you know it isn't. But you've scarcely ever mentioned your uncle to me; now it appears that you must have been very dear to him. I can't understand it."

"Can't, eh? That's somewhat uncomplimentary to me. I suppose the truth is that Uncle Jethro couldn't think of any one else to leave his money to; for he was a widower and childless. My dear dead-and-gone father was his only brother, and he had no sisters, so I'm the only remaining male member of the family."

"But what sort of man was he? Do tell me something about him."

"I wish I knew a lot of pleasant things to tell, but I know little of him except what I heard when I was a boy. Father, in whom family affection was very strong, loved him dearly, yet used to be greatly provoked by him at times; for uncle's only thought was of money — perhaps because he had nothing else to think of, and he wrote advice persistently, with the manner of an elder brother — a man whose advice should be taken as a command. When I started East I stopped off and tramped three miles across country to call on him, for the letter he wrote us when father died was a masterpiece of affection and appreciation. I had never seen him, and I'm ashamed to say, after what has just occurred, that after our first

interview I had no desire to see him again. His greeting was fervent only in curiosity; he studied my face as if I were a possible customer who might not be entirely trustworthy. Then he made haste to tell me, with many details, that he was the principal merchant and business man in the county, where he had started thirty years before, with no capital but his muscles and wits. He intimated that if I cared to remain with him a few months on trial, and succeeded in impressing him favorably, I might in time earn an interest in his business; but I thought I had seen enough of country stores and country ways to last me for life; so I made the excuse that as my parents were dead and my sisters married, I felt justified in going to New York to continue my studies. When he asked me what I was studying, I was obliged to reply, 'Literature and art,' at which statement he sneered — I may say truthfully that he snorted — and at once became cooler than before; so I improved my first opportunity, between customers' visits, to say that it was time for me to be starting back to the railway station. In justice to myself,

however, as well as to him, I could not start without telling him how greatly his letter about my father had affected me. For a moment he was silent: he looked thoughtful, and as tender, I suppose, as a burly, hard-natured man could look; then he said:—

"'Your father was one of the very elect, but—'

"I quickly interrupted with, 'I'm not very religious, but I won't listen to a word of criticism of one of the elect—least of all, of my father. Good by, uncle.' He made haste to say that the only two men of the Somerton family shouldn't part in anger; and when he learned that I had walked three miles through the darkness and November mud, and intended to walk back to the station, he told a man who seemed to be his clerk,—Caleb Wright, evidently the man mentioned in this extraordinary letter,—to get out some sort of conveyance and drive me over. While Caleb was at the stables, my uncle questioned me closely as to my capital and business prospects. I was not going to be outdone in personal pride, so I replied that, except for some mining stocks which some one

had imposed upon my father, and were down to two cents per share, I'd exactly what he had told me he began with, — muscle and wits. He saw that I had no overcoat, — boys and young men in our part of the country seldom had them, — so he pressed one upon me, and when I tried to decline it, he said, 'For my dead brother's sake,' which broke me down. When I reached the train, I found in the overcoat pockets some handkerchiefs, gloves, hosiery, neckwear, and several kinds of patent medicines, which evidently he thought trustworthy; there was also a portmonnaie containing a few small notes and some coin. I wrote, thanking him, as soon as I found employment; but he never answered my letter, so I was obliged to assume that he had repented of his generosity and wished no further communication with me."

"How strange! But the man — Caleb — who drove you to the station, and who seems to be a life pensioner on the estate, and is to be dependent upon us, — how did he impress you?"

"I scarcely remember him, except as a small

man with a small face, small beard, a small gentle voice, and pleasanter eyes than country clerks usually have. I remember that his manner seemed very kindly, —after my experience with my uncle's, — and he said a clever or quaint thing once in a while, as any other countryman might have done. For the rest, he is a Civil War veteran, and about forty years of age — perhaps less, for beards make men look older than they are."

"And the town with the odd name — Claybanks?"

"I saw it only in the dark, which means I didn't see it at all. I believe 'tis the county town, and probably it doesn't differ much from other Western villages of a thousand or two people. 'Twill be a frightful change from New York, dear girl, for you."

"You will be there," replied Grace, with a look that quickly brought her husband's arms around her. "And you will be prominent among men, instead of merely one man among a dozen in a great office. Every one will know my husband; he won't any longer go to and from business as unknown as any mere no-

body, as you and most other men do in New York. 'Tis simply ridiculous — 'tis unnatural, and entirely wrong, that my husband's many clever, splendid qualities aren't known and put to their proper uses. You ought to be the manager of the firm you are with, instead of a mere clerk. I want other people to understand you, and admire you, just as I do, but no one is any one in this great crowded, lonely, dreadful city."

"There, there!" said Philip. "Don't make me conceited. Besides, we've neglected that check for at least ten minutes. Let's have another look at it. A thousand dollars! — as much money as both of us have had to spend in a year, after paying our rent! A tenth part of it will be more than enough to take us and our belongings to Claybanks; with the other nine hundred we'll buy a lot of things with which to delight ourselves and astonish the natives, — silk dresses and other adornments for you, likewise a piano, to replace the one we have been hiring, and some pictures, and bric-à-brac, and we'll subscribe to a lot of magazines, and — "

"But suppose," said Grace, "that after reaching there you find the business difficult or unendurable, and wish to come back to New York?"

"Never fear for me! I'm concerned only for you, dear girl. I know Western country places, having been brought up in one; I know the people, and among them you will take place at once as a queen. But queens are not always the most contented of creatures. Their subjects may not be—"

"If my first and dearest subject remains happy," said Grace, "I shall have no excuse for complaining."

II — TAKING POSSESSION

THE ensuing week was a busy one for Philip and Grace; for to announce an unsuspected marriage and a coming departure at one and the same time to two sets of acquaintances is no ordinary task, even to two social nobodies in New York. Besides, Philip had lost no time in making the legal acknowledgment that was requisite to the cashing of his check, and in spending a portion of the proceeds. A short letter came from Caleb Wright, enclosing one almost equally short from the late Jethro Somerton, which assured Philip of Caleb's honesty and general trustworthiness, and that the business would not suffer for a few days.

"Caleb is a far better and broader man than I," Philip's uncle had written, "but he lacks force and push. I'm satisfied he can't help it.

He is stronger than he looks, and younger too, but he was fool enough to take part in the Civil War, where he got a bullet that is still roaming about in him, besides a thorough malarial soaking that medicine can't cure. This often makes him dull; sometimes for weeks together. But he knows human nature through and through, and if I had a son to bring up, I'd rather give the job to Caleb than trust myself with it. He has done me a lot of good in some ways, and I feel indebted to him and want him to be well cared for as long as he lives. His salary is small, and he won't ask to have it increased; but sometimes he'll insist that you help him with some projects of his own, and I advise you to do it, for he will make your life miserable until you do, and the cost won't be great. I used to fight him and lose my temper over some of his hobbies, but now I wish I hadn't; 'twould have been cheaper."

"That," said Philip, after reading the passage to Grace, "is about as tantalizing as if written for the purpose of teasing me, for there's not a shadow of hint as to the nature of Caleb's projects and hobbies. He may

be experimenting in perpetual motion or at extracting sunshine from cucumbers. Still, as the man is honest and his freaks are not expensive, I don't see that I can suffer greatly. By the way, when I informed our firm that they would have to endure the withdrawal of my valuable services, and told them the reason, they were not a bit surprised; they said my uncle had written them several times, asking about my progress and character, and they had been unable to say anything to my discredit. They had been curious enough to make inquiries, from the commercial agencies, about the writer of the letters, and they took pleasure in informing me that Uncle Jethro's store, houses, farms, were estimated by good judges, at — guess how much."

Grace wondered vaguely a moment or two before she replied: —

"Aunt Eunice's cousin was the principal merchant in a town of two or three thousand people, and his estate, at his death, was — inventoried, I think was the word — at twelve thousand dollars. Is it as much as that?"

"Multiply it by six, my dear, and you'll be

within the mark, which is seventy-five thousand dollars."

"Oh, Phil!"

"I repeat it, seventy-five thousand dollars, and that in a country where a family with a thousand a year can live on the fat of the land! Our firm declares that our fortune will be as much to us, out there, as half a million would be in New York. Doesn't that make your heart dance? I can give you horses and carriages, dress you in silks and laces, hire plenty of servants for you; in short, make you in appearance and luxury what you will be by nature, the finest lady in the county. Dear woman, the better I've learned to know you, the more guilty I've felt at having married you; for I saw plainly that you were fit to adorn any station in the world, instead of being the wife of a man so poor that you yourself had to work for wages to help us have a home. At times I've felt so mean about it that—"

Grace stopped further utterance on the subject by murmuring:—

"Seventy-five thousand dollars! What shall we do with it?"

"Enjoy it, dear girl; that's what we shall do. We've youth, health, taste, spirits, energy, and best of all, love. If all these qualities can't help us to enjoy money, I can't imagine what else can. Besides, Claybanks is bound to be a city in the course of a few years — so uncle said; and if he was right, we will be prepared to take the lead in society. 'Twon't be injudicious to have the largest, best-furnished house, and a full circle of desirable acquaintances, against the time when the sleepy village shall be transformed in a day, Western fashion, into a bustling city."

The several days that followed were spent largely in longings to get away, and regrets at leaving New York's many new delights that were at last within reach; but finally Philip wrote Caleb Wright that he would arrive at Claybanks on a specified date, and asked that the best room in the best hotel be engaged for him. The couple reached the railway station at dawn of a dull December morning, and after an hour of effort, while Grace remained in the single room at the station and endeavored not to be nauseated by the mixed

odors of stale tobacco, an overloaded stove, and a crate of live chickens awaiting shipment, Philip found a conveyance to take them to Claybanks. The unpaved road was very muddy, and the trees were bare, the farm-houses were few and unsightly. Philip was obliged to ask: —

"Isn't it shockingly dismal?"

"Is this the road," Grace answered, "over which you walked, at night, when you visited your uncle?"

"The very same, I suppose, for there's never a choice of roads between two unimportant places."

"Then I sha'n't complain," said Grace, nestling very close to her husband.

The outlook did not improve as the travellers came near to the village of Claybanks. Houses were more numerous, but most of them were very small, many were unpainted, and some were of rough logs. The fences, while exhibiting great variety of design, were almost uniform in shabbiness.

"Rather a dismal picture, isn't it?" asked Philip. "It suggests a kalsominer's attempt to copy a Corot."

"I'm keeping my eyes closed," Grace replied. "I'm going to defer being impressed by the town until a sunny day arrives."

"If you were to look about you now," said Philip, gloomily, "you'd see the fag end of nothing — the jumping-off place of the world. How my uncle succeeded in living here — still stranger in making money here — passes my comprehension."

The best room at the hotel proved to be quite clean, but as bare as a hotel chamber could be, and also very cold. Philip begged for one with a fire, but was told that all warmed rooms were already occupied by regular lodgers. Fortunately breakfast was being served. It consisted of fried pork, fried sausage, fried eggs, tough biscuits, butter of a flavor which the newest guests neither recalled nor approved, two kinds of pie, and coffee.

"If this is the best hotel Caleb could find for us, what can the worst be?" whispered Philip.

"Perhaps we can find board in a private family," whispered Grace, in reply.

"How early will Somerton's store be open?"

asked Philip of the landlord, who had also served as table-waiter.

"It's been open since daybreak, I reckon; it usually is," was the reply. "I shouldn't wonder if you was the new boss, seein' you have the same name. Well, I'm glad to see you. I'm one of your customers."

"Thank you very much. Is the store far from here?"

"Only two blocks up street. You'll find Caleb there. You know Caleb Wright?"

"Oh, yes; I've been here before."

"That so? Must have put up at the other hotel, then — or mebbe you stopped with your uncle."

"Er — yes, for the little while I was in town. I wish there was a warm room in which my wife could rest, while I go up to the store to see Caleb."

"Well, what's the matter with the parlor? Come along; let me show you."

Philip looked into the parlor; so did Grace, who quickly said: —

"Do let me go to the store with you. You know I always enjoy a walk after breakfast."

"Pretty soft walkin', ma'am," said the landlord, after eying Grace's daintily shod feet. "Better let me borrow you my wife's gum shoes; she ain't likely to go out of the house to-day. You ought to have gum boots, though, if you're dead set on walkin' about in winter."

Grace thanked the landlord for his offer and advice, but hurried Phil out of the hotel, after which she said:—

"That was my first visit to a hotel of any kind. Do they improve on acquaintance? Oh, Phil! Don't look so like a thunder-cloud! What can the matter be?"

"I should have been thoughtful enough to come a day or two in advance, and found a proper home for you. I hope Caleb will know of one. Be careful!—the sidewalk is ending. Let me go first."

Two or three successive planks served as continuation of the sidewalk, and their ends did not quite join, but Philip skilfully piloted his wife along them. Beyond, in front of a residence, was a brick walk about two feet wide, after which was encountered soft mud for about fifty linear feet. Philip looked about

for bits of board, stone, brick — anything with which to make solid footing at short intervals. But he could see nothing available; neither could he see any person out of doors, so in desperation he took Grace in his arms and carried her to a street-crossing, where to his delight he saw a broad stick of hewn timber embedded in the mud and extending from side to side. After this were some alternations of brick sidewalk, mud, and a short causeway of tan-bark, the latter ending at a substantial pavement in front of a store over which was a weather-beaten sign bearing the name JETHRO SOMERTON.

"The treasure-house of Her Majesty Grace I., Queen of Claybanks," said Philip. "Shall we enter?"

As Philip opened the door, a small man who was replenishing the stove looked around, dropped a stick of wood, wiped his hands on his coat, came forward, smiling pleasantly, and said: —

"Mr. Somerton, I'm very glad to see you again."

"Thank you, Mr. Wright. Let me make you acquainted with Mrs. Somerton."

Caleb seemed not a bit appalled as he shook hands with Grace. He held her hand several seconds while he looked at her, and seemed to approve of what he saw; then he said:—

"Your uncle told me of your marriage, and thought you'd been very unwise. I reckon he'd change his mind if he was here, though 'twas a hard one to change."

Grace blushed slightly and replied:—

"I hope so, I'm sure. Have you had the entire work of the store since Uncle Jethro died?"

"Uncle — Jethro! I don't believe he'd have died if he'd heard you say that! Well, yes, I've been alone here. Your husband wrote he'd be along pretty soon, an' as the roads was so soft that the farmers didn't come to town much, I didn't think it worth while to get extra help. Come into the back room, won't you? There's chairs there, an' a good fire too."

"Are the farmers your principal customers?" Grace asked, as she sank into a capacious wooden armchair.

"Well, they're the most important ones. They take most time, too, though some of the women-folks in this town can use more time in spendin' a quarter an' makin' up their minds — principally the latter, than — well, I don't s'pose you can imagine how they wait, an' fuss, an' turn things over, an' — "

"Oh, indeed I can," said Grace; "for once I was a country girl, and in New York I was a saleswoman in a store, and have waited on just such customers half an hour at a time without making a sale, though the store was one of the biggest in the city, and its prices were as low as any."

"I want to know!" exclaimed Caleb, whose eyes had opened wide while Grace talked. "You? — a country gal? — an' a saleswoman? I wouldn't have thought it!"

"Why not? Don't I look clever enough?"

"Oh, that ain't it, but — "

"Some day, when you and Philip are real busy," suggested Grace, "perhaps you'll let me help you behind the counter."

"Mrs. Somerton is a great joker," explained Philip, as Caleb continued to look incredulous.

"But I wasn't joking," said Grace. "I'll really help in the store some day when —"

"When your husband lets you, you said," remarked Philip.

"Well," drawled Caleb, slowly regaining his customary expression, "I shouldn't wonder if Mrs. Somerton's the kind that's let to do pretty much as she likes."

Philip laughed, and replied: —

"You're a quick judge of human nature, Mr. Wright. But before we talk business I want some advice and assistance. We can't live at that hotel; for my wife would have to sit in a cold room all day, which isn't to be thought of. Can't you suggest a boarding place, in a private family?"

"Scarcely, I'm afraid," Caleb replied after a moment of thought. "I don't b'lieve any families here ever took boarders, or would know how to do it to your likin'. What's the matter with your takin' your uncle's house an' livin' in it? It's plain, but comfortable, an' just as he left it."

"Is there a servant in it?"

"Oh, no; there hasn't been since his wife

died, an' *she* wasn't what you city folks call a servant. 'Helper' is what you want to say in these parts. They're hard to get, too, an' if they're not treated same as if they was members of the family, they won't stay. About your uncle, — well, you see he took his meals at the hotel, an' done his own housework, which didn't amount to much except makin' his bed ev'ry mornin' an' makin' fire through the winter. S'pose you take a look at it, when you're good and ready. It's on the back of the store-lot, and the key is in the desk here. Your furniture an' things, that come by rail, I had put in the warehouse behind the store, not knowin' just what you'd want to do."

Philip and Grace looked at each other, and exchanged a few words about possible housekeeping. Caleb looked at both with great interest, and improved the first moment of silence to say: —

"An' she's — you've — been a shop-girl!" Philip frowned slightly, and Caleb hastened to add, "I ort to have said a saleswoman. But who would have thought it!"

"Caleb is a character," Grace said as soon as she and her husband left the store. "I'm going to be very fond of him."

"Very well; do so. I'll promise not to be jealous. He's certainly hearty, and 'tis good for us that he's honest; for we and all we have are practically in his hands and will remain there until I get a grip on the business. But I do wish Uncle Jethro hadn't been so enragingly non-committal about the chap's peculiarities. I shall be on pins and needles until I know what the old gentleman was hinting at. Besides, he may have been entirely mistaken. A mind that could imagine that this out-of-the-world hole-in-the-ground must one day become a city could scarcely have been entirely trustworthy about anything."

III — INTRODUCED

40

THE house in which the late Jethro Somerton had lived was a plain wooden structure, entered by a door opening directly into a room which had been used as a sitting room. Behind this was a kitchen, beside which was a bedroom, while in front, beside the sitting room, was a "best room" or parlor. There was a second floor, in which were four rooms, some of which had never been used. The ceilings throughout the house were so low that Philip, who was quite tall, could touch them with his finger-tips when he stood on tiptoe. The walls of the sitting room and parlor were hard-finished and white; all the other walls were rough and whitewashed.

"This is quite out of the question, as a home," said Philip. "No hall, no — "

"Why not make believe that the sitting room

is a square hall?" Grace asked. "They're the rage in the swell villages around New York."

"But there's no bath room."

"We can make one, on the upper floor, where we've rooms to spare."

"Perhaps; but 'tis very improbable that the town has a water service."

"Then have a tank, fed from the roof or by a pump, as Aunt Eunice has in her cottage, smaller than this and in a town no larger than Claybanks."

"No furnace, of course, to warm the house, and — ugh! — I don't believe the town knows of the existence of coal, for both stoves at the store are fed with wood."

"So they were, and — oh, I see! Here are fireplaces in the sitting-room — or hall, I suppose I should say — and in the parlor! Think how unutterably we longed for the unattainable — that is, an open wood fire — in our little flat in the city!"

"But, dear girl, a fireplace grows cold at night."

"Quite likely; but don't you suppose the

principal merchant in town could economize on something so as to afford enough quilts and blankets to keep his family from freezing to death while they sleep?"

"You angel, you've all the brains of the family. Where did you learn so much about houses? And about what to do when you don't find what you want in them? And who taught you?"

"I suppose necessity taught me," Grace replied, with a laugh, "and within the past few minutes, too. For, don't you see, we must live in this house. There seems to be no other place for us. And I suppose 'tis instinct for women, rather than men, to see the possibilities of houses, for a woman has to spend most of her life indoors."

Then she walked slowly toward the kitchen, where she contemplated the stove, two grease-spotted tables, and four fly-specked walls. Philip followed her, saying:—

"What a den! Money must be spent here at once, and — oh, Grace! You're crying? Come here — quick! I never before saw tears in your eyes!"

"And you never shall again," Grace sobbed. "I don't see what can be the matter with me; it must be the cold weather that has—"

"This forlorn barn of a house and this shabby, God-forsaken town have broken your heart!" exclaimed Philip. "I wish I too could cry. I assure you my heart has been in my boots, though I've tried hard to keep it in its proper place. Don't let's remain here another hour. I'll gladly abandon my inheritance to the benevolent societies. We'll hurry back to the city and let our things follow us."

"But we can't, Phil, for we've burned our bridges behind us. We can take only such money as will get us back, and we would not be certain of employment on reaching the city. Besides, we told our acquaintances of our good fortune, but not of its conditions; if we go back, they will suspect you and pity me."

"You're right—you're right!" said Philip, from behind tightly closed jaws. "Why hadn't I sense to get leave of absence for a week, and look at the gift before accepting it? Still, we're alive; we have the money, and the first and best use of it is to make you comfortable. I'll

get Caleb to get me some men at once, — one of them to make fires, and the others to bring over and unpack our goods. In the meanwhile, you shall at least keep warm in the office of the store. You'll have only barrels of molasses and vinegar and bales of grain-sacks for company, but — "

"But my husband won't be farther away than the next room," Grace said, "and the door between shall remain open."

Then Philip kissed the tears from her eyes, and Grace called herself an unreasonable baby, and Philip called himself an unpardonable donkey, and they returned together to the store, entering softly by the back door, so that Caleb should not see them and join them at once. But dingy though the back windows of the office were, Caleb, standing behind one of them, said to himself: —

"Rubbin' her face with her handkerchief! — that means she's been cryin'. Well, I should think she would, if city houses are anythin' like the picture-papers make 'em out to be."

Caleb retired to the store, where Phil joined him after a few moments, and said: —

"We shall live in the old house, Mr. Wright. My wife and I have been looking it over, and we see how it can be made very comfortable."

"You do, eh?" Caleb replied; at the same time his face expressed so much astonishment that Philip laughed, and said:—

"You mustn't mistake us for a pair of city upstarts. My wife, as she told you, was a country girl; she went to New York only a few years ago, and 'twas only four years since I passed through here on my way to the city. We're strong enough and brave enough to take anything as we find it, if we can't make it better. That reminds me that the old house can be bettered in many ways. Is there a plumber in the town?"

"No, sir!" replied Caleb, with emphasis, and a show of indignation such as might have been expected were he asked if Claybanks supported a gambling den. "We've read about 'em, in the city papers, an' I reckon one of 'em would starve to death if he come out here, unless the boys run him out of town first."

"H'm! I'm going to beg you to restrain the

boys when I coax a plumber here from the nearest city, for a few days' work in the house. And I've another favor to ask; you know people here, and I don't, as yet. Won't you find me two or three men, this morning — at once — to unpack my things that came from the city, and put them into the house? When they're ready to move them, I wish you'd make some excuse to coax my wife out here, so that I can slip down to the house, without her knowledge, and prepare a surprise for her by placing all our belongings about as they were in our rooms in the city."

"Good for you! Good for you!" exclaimed Caleb, rubbing his hands. "If you're that kind o' man, I reckon you're deservin' of her. Most men's so busy with their own affairs, or so careless, that women comin' to a new country have a back-breakin' time of it, an' a heart-breakin' too. I dunno, though, that I can keep her away from you long enough. From her ways, — the little I've seen of 'em, — I reckon she's one o' the kind o' wives that sticks to her husband like hot tar to a sheep's wool."

"Oh, you'll have no trouble, for she already has taken a great liking to you."

"I recippercate the sentiment," said Caleb, again rubbing his hands. "I don't know much, but a man can't work in a country store about twenty year or more without sizin' up new specimens of human nature powerful quick, an' makin' mighty few mistakes at it. You'll find out how it is. All of a sudden, some day, a new settler, that you never saw before, 'll come in an' want to be trusted for goods — sca'cely any of 'em has any cash, an' you have to wait for your pay till they can raise some kind of produce, an' bring it in. If you can't read faces, you're likely to be a goner, to the amount of what you sell, an' if you refuse, you may be a thousan' times wuss a goner; for if the man's honest, an' also as proud as poor folks usually be, he'll never forgive you, and some other storekeeper'll get all his trade. Or, a stranger passin' through town wants to sell a hoss; you don't know him or the hoss either, or whether they come by each other honestly, an' — But this ain't what you was talk-

in' about. I'll stir about and see what help I can pick up. I reckon you won't have no trouble in the store while I'm gone; prices is marked on pretty much everythin'. Want to get settled to-day?"

"Yes, if possible."

"Reckon I'll see to makin' fires in the house, then, so's to warm things up. If any customer comes in that you don't quite understand, or wants any goods that bothers you, try to hold him till I get back. 'Twon't be hard. Folks in these parts ain't generally in a drivin' hurry."

"All right. I used to lounge in the stores in our town; I know their ways pretty well, and I remember many prices."

"That's good. Well, if you get stuck, get your wife to help you. There's a good deal in havin' been behind a counter, besides what Mrs. Somerton is of her own self."

Then Caleb turned up his coat-collar and sauntered out.

"Grace," shouted Philip, as soon as the door had closed, "do come here! Allow me to congratulate you on having made a con-

quest of Caleb Wright. He kindly tolerates me, but 'tis quite plain that he regards you as the head of the family. I was going to replace that shabby old sign over the door, but now I fear that Caleb will demand that the new one shall read 'Mrs. Somerton & Husband.'"

Grace's face glowed as merrily as if it had not been tear-stained half an hour before, and she replied: —

"I've not seen a possible conquest — since I was married — that would give me greater pleasure; for I am you, you know, and you are me, and the you-I would be dreadfully helpless if we hadn't such a man to depend upon."

"'You-I'! That's a good word — a very good one. You ought to be richly paid for coining it."

"Pay me, then, and promptly!" Grace replied.

Some forms of payment consume much time when the circumstances do not require haste: they also have a way of making the payer and payee oblivious to their surround-

ings, so Philip and Grace supposed themselves alone until they heard the front door close with a loud report, and saw a small boy who seemed to consist entirely of eyes. Grace quickly and intently studied the label of an empty powder keg on the counter, while Philip said: —

"Good morning, young man. What can we do for you?"

"Wantapoundo'shinglenails," was the reply, in nasal monotone.

Philip searched the hardware section of the store, at the same time searching his memory for the price, in his native town, of shingle nails. The packing of the nails, in soft brown paper, was a slow and painful proceeding to a man whose hands in years had encountered nothing harder or rougher than a pen-holder, but when it was completed, the boy, taking the package, departed rapidly.

"He forgot to pay for them," said Grace.

"Yes," Philip replied. "I hope his memory will be equally dormant in other respects."

But it wasn't; for little Scrapsey Green stopped several times, on the way home, to tell

acquaintances that "up to Somerton's store ther was a man a-kissin' a woman like all-possessed, an' he wasn't Caleb, neither."

The aforesaid acquaintances made haste to spread the story abroad, as did Scrapsey's own family; so when Caleb returned, an hour later, the store was jammed with apparent customers, and Philip was behind one counter, and Grace behind the other, and the counters themselves were strewn and covered with goods of all sorts, at which the people pretended to look, while they gazed at the "man and woman" of whom they had been told.

"You must be kind o' tuckered out," said Caleb, softly, behind Grace's counter, as he stood an instant with his back to the crowd, and pretended to adjust a shelf of calicoes. "Better take a rest in the back room. I'll relieve you."

Grace responded quickly to the suggestion, while Caleb, leaning over the goods on the counter, said, again softly, to the women nearest him: —

"That's the new Mr. Somerton's wife — an' that's him, at t'other counter."

"Mighty scrumptious gal!" commented a middle-aged woman.

"Yes, an' she's just as nice as she looks. Clear gold an' clear grit, an' her husband's right good stuff, too."

Within two or three minutes Caleb succeeded in signalling Philip to the back room; five minutes later the store was empty, and Caleb joined the couple, and said:—

"Sell much?"

"Not a penny's worth," Grace replied, laughing heartily. "We've been comparing notes."

"Sho!" exclaimed Caleb, although his eyes twinkled. "I met Scrapsey Green up the road, with a pound of shingle-nails that he said come from here, an' I didn't s'pose Scrapsey would lie, for he's one o' my Sunday-school scholars." Philip and Grace quickly reddened, while Caleb continued, "Well, might's well be interduced to the gen'ral public one time's another, I s'pose, 'specially if you can be kept busy, so's not to feel uncomfortable. Besides," he said, after a moment of reflection, "if a man hain't got a right to kiss his own wife, on his own property,

whose wife has he got a right to kiss, an' where-'bouts?" Then Caleb looked at the account books on the desk, and continued: "Reckon you forgot to charge the nails. Well, I don't wonder."

IV—HOME-MAKING

54

"*I WISH* the Doctor would stop in," said Caleb, in a manner as casual as if his first call that morning had not been on Doctor and Mrs. Taggess, whom he told of the new arrivals, declaring that Philip and Grace were "about as nice as the best, 'specially her, an' powerful in need of a cheerin' up," and begging Mrs. Taggess to invite Grace to mid-day dinner at once, so that Philip might be free to prepare his surprise for Grace.

"The Doctor?" Grace echoed. "Why, Mr. Wright, which of us looks ill?"

"Neither one nor t'other, at present," Caleb replied; "but this country's full of malary, an' forewarned is forearmed. Besides, our doctor's the kind to do your heart good, an' his wife's just like him. They're good an' clever, an' hearty, an' sociable, an' up to snuff in gen'ral.

Fact is, they're the salt of the earth, or to as much of it as knows 'em. Sometimes I think that Claybanks an' the round-about country would kind o' decay an' disappear if it wasn't for Doc Taggess an' his wife. Doc's had good chances to go to the city, for he's done some great cures that's got in the medical papers, but here he stays. He don't charge high, an' a good deal of the time it don't do him no good to charge, but here he sticks — says he knows all the people an' their constitutions, an' so on, an' a new doctor might let some folks die while he was learnin' the ropes, so to speak. How's that for a genuine man?"

"First-rate," said Philip, and Grace assented. Caleb continued to tell of the Doctor's good qualities, and suddenly said: —

"Speak of angels, an' you hear their buggy-wheels, an' the driver hollerin' 'Whoa!' I think I just heard the Doctor say it, out in front."

A middle-aged couple bustled into the store; Grace hastily consulted a small mirror in the back room, and Caleb whispered to Philip: —

"If they ask you folks to ride or do anythin',

let your wife go, an' you make an excuse to stay. There's a powerful lot of your New York stuff to be fixed, if you expect to do it to-day. Come along! Doctor an' Mrs. Taggess, this is my new boss, an' here comes his wife."

"Glad to meet you," said the Doctor, a man of large, rugged, earnest face, extending a hand to each.

Mrs. Taggess, who was a motherly-looking woman, exclaimed to Grace: —

"You poor child, how lonesome you must feel! So far from your home!"

"Oh, no, — only the length of the store-yard," Grace replied.

"Eh? Brave girl!" said the Doctor. "That's the sort of spirit to have in a new country, if you want to be happy. Well, I can't stop more than a minute, — I've a patient to see in the back street. I understand you're stopping at the hotel, and as, for the reputation of the town, we shouldn't like you to get a violent attack of indigestion the first day, we came down to ask you to dine with us at twelve. Mrs. Somerton can ride up now and visit with

my wife, and her husband can come up when he will. Caleb can give him the direction."

"So kind of you!" murmured Grace, and Philip said:—

"I shall be under everlasting obligations to you for giving my wife a view of some better interior than that of a store or that dismal hotel, but I daren't leave to-day. Caleb has arranged for several men to see me."

"Well, well, I'll catch you some other day," said the Doctor. "I must be going; hope you'll find business as brisk as I do. You may be sure that Mrs. Taggess will take good care of your wife, and see that she gets safely back. Good day. I'll drop in once in a while. Hope to know you better. I make no charge for social calls."

So it came to pass that within ten minutes Philip was furnishing his new home with the contents of the old. The possible contents of a New York flat for two are small, at best; yet as each bit of furniture, upholstery, and bric-à-brac was placed in position in the Jethro Somerton house, the plain rooms looked less bare, so Philip was correspondingly elated.

True, he had to use ordinary iron nails to hang his pictures, and was in desperation for some moments for lack of rods for portières and curtains, but he supplied their places with rake-handles from the store and rested them in meat-hooks. He worked so long, and hurried so often into the store for one makeshift after another, that Caleb became excited and peered through the windows of the store's back room at his first opportunity, just in time to see the upright piano moved in. Unable to endure the strain of curiosity any longer, he quickly devised an excuse, in the shape of a cup of coffee and some buttered toast, all made at the stove in the back room of the store. Coaxing a trustworthy but lounging customer to "mind store" for him a minute or two, Caleb put the refreshments in a covered box and timed himself to meet Philip as the latter emerged from the warehouse with an armful of books.

"Didn't want to disturb you, but seein' that you let the hotel dinner-hour pass an' was workin' hard, I thought mebbe a little snack" (here Caleb lifted the lid of the box) "'d find its way to the right place."

"Mr. Wright, you're a trump! Would you mind bringing it into the house for me, my hands being full?"

"Don't want to intrude."

"Nonsense! Aren't we friends? If not, we're going to be. Besides, I really want some one to rejoice with me over the surprise I'm going to give my wife. Come right in. Drop the box on this table."

"Well!" exclaimed Caleb, after a long suspiration, "I reckon I done that just in time! A second more, an' I'd ha' dropped the hull thing on this carpet — or is it a shawl? Why, 'taint the same place at all! Je-ru-salem! What would your Uncle Jethro say if he could look in a minute? Reckon he'd want to come back an' stay. I dunno's I ought to have said that, though, for I've always b'lieved he was among the saved, an' of course your house ain't better'n heaven, but — "

"But 'twill be heaven to my wife and me," said Philip.

"Well, I reckon homes was invented 'specially to prepare folks for heaven, — or t'other place, 'cordin' to the folks."

"Come into the parlor," said Philip, toast and coffee in hand. For a moment or two Caleb stood speechless in the doorway; then he said: —

"Je-ru-salem! This reminds me to take off my hat. Why, I s'posed you folks wasn't over-an'-above well fixed in the city, but this is a palace!"

"Not quite," said Philip, although delighted by Caleb's comments. "Thousands of quiet young couples in New York have prettier parlors than this."

"I want to know!" Then Caleb sighed. "I reckon that's why young people that go there from the country never come home again. I've knowed a lot of 'em that I'd like to see once more. Hello! I reckon that's a pianner; I've seen pictures of 'em in advertisements. A firm in the city once wanted your uncle to take the county agency for pianners." Caleb laughed almost convulsively as he continued, "Ye ort to have seen Jethro's face when he read that letter!"

"Do you mean to say that there are no pianos in this county?" asked Philip.

"I just do. But there once was an organ. Squire Pease, out in Hick'ry Township, bought one two or three years ago for his gals. He was runnin' for sheriff then, an' thought somethin' so new an' startlin' might look like a sign of public spirit, an' draw him some votes. But somehow his gals didn't get the hang of it, an' the noises it made always set visitors' dogs to howlin', an' to tryin' to get into the house an' kill the varmint, whatever it was, an' Pease's dogs tried to down the visitors' dogs, an' that made bad feelin'; so Pease traded the organ to a pedler for a patent corn-planter, an' he didn't get 'lected sheriff, either. I allers reckoned that ef anybody'd knowed how to play on it, that organ might ha' been a means of grace in these parts, for I've knowed a nigger's fiddle to stop a drunken fight that was too much for the sheriff an' his posse." Caleb looked the piano over as if it were a horse on sale, and continued: —

"Don't seem to work with a crank."

"Oh, no," replied Philip, placing a chair in front of the instrument and seating himself. "This is the method." He indulged in two or

three "runs," and then, with his heart on Grace, he dashed into the music dearest to him and his wife — perhaps because it was not played at their own very quiet marriage, — the Mendelssohn Wedding March.

"Je-ru-salem!" exclaimed Caleb. "That's a hair-lifter! What a blessin' such a machine must be to a man that knows the tunes!"

Rightly construing this remark as an indication that Caleb longed to hear music with which he was acquainted, Philip searched his memory for familiar music of the days when he was a country boy, and which would therefore be recognized by Caleb. Suddenly he recalled an air very dear to several religious denominations, although it has been dropped from almost all modern hymnals, probably because its vivacity, repetitions, and its inevitable suggestion of runs and variations had made it seem absolutely indecorous to ears that were fastidious as well as religious. Philip had heard it played (by request) as a quick march, by a famous brass band, at the return of troops from a soldier's funeral in New York; so, after playing a few bars of it softly, he tried to recall and imitate

the march effect. He succeeded so well that soon he was surprised to see Caleb himself, an ex-soldier, striding to and fro, singing the hymn beginning: —

"Am I a soldier of the Cross?"

When Philip stopped, Caleb shouted: —

"Three cheers for the gospel! Say! I wish—"

"Well?"

"Never mind," replied Caleb. "I was only thinkin' that if our church could hear that, there'd be an almighty revival of religion. Reckon I'd better git back to the store. Say, you've been so full of palace-makin' that you've let the fires go out. I'll just load 'em up again for you; afterwards, if you chance to think of 'em, there's lots of good dry hick'ry in the woodshed, right behind the kitchen."

Philip continued to make hurried dashes into the store for necessities and makeshifts. When finally he entered for candles, Caleb remarked: —

"I'll call you in when your wife comes; but if you don't want her to smell a rat, you'd better shut the front shutters. There's already been people hangin' on the fence, lookin' at them

lace fixin's in the winders, an' women are powerful observin'. An' say, here's a new tea-kettle, full of water; better set it on the kitchen stove. Pianners are splendid, — I never would have believed there could be anythin' like 'em, — but the singin' of a tea-kettle's got a powerful grip on most women's ears. I didn't see no ev'ryday dishes among your things. Don't you want some?"

Philip thought he did not, and he hurried to the house. He was soon summoned to the store, and through the coming darkness of the sunset hour he saw at the back door his wife, who said: —

"Oh, Phil! Mrs. Taggess is the dearest woman! We were of the same age before I'd been with her an hour."

"Eh? You don't look a moment older."

"But she looked twenty years younger. When she's animated, she — oh, I never saw such a complexion."

"Not even in your mirror?"

"No, you silly dear! And her home is real cosey. There's nothing showy or expensive in it; but if ever I get homesick, I'm going to

hurry up there, even if the mud is a foot deep."

"Good! Perhaps you got some ideas of how to fix up our own dismal barn of a house. Come down and look about it once more."

Together they started. As they reached the front door, and Philip threw it open, Caleb, with his eye at the back window of the store, saw Grace stop and toss up her hands. As the door closed, Caleb jumped up and down, and afterward said to himself: —

"There are times when I wish, church or no church, that I'd learned how to dance."

"Phil! Phil! Phil!" exclaimed Grace, dashing from one room to another, all of which were as well lighted as candles could make them. "How did you? — how could you? No woman could have done better! Oh! home! — home! — home! And a few hours ago, right here, I was the most disheartened, rebellious, wicked woman in the world! Come here to me — this instant!"

There are times when manly obedience is a natural virtue. For a few moments a single easy chair was large enough for the couple,

who laughed, and cried, and otherwise comported themselves very much as any other healthy and affectionate couple might have done in similar circumstances. A knock at the door recalled them to the world.

"Don't like to disturb you," said Caleb, "but Doc Taggess has dropped in again an' asked for Mr. Somerton, an' as his time's not all his own, mebbe you'd —"

"Do tell him how I enjoyed my day with his wife," said Grace. "I tried to, when he brought me down, but I don't feel that I said half enough."

Philip hurried to the store; Caleb lingered and said to Grace: —

"Reckon you've had a little s'prise, hain't you? Your husband showed me 'round a little."

"Little surprise? Oh, Mr. Wright! 'Twas the greatest, dearest surprise of my life. But 'twas just like Phil; he's the thoughtfullest, smartest man in the world."

"Is, eh? Well, stick to that, an' you'll always be happy, even if you should chance to be mistaken. But say, — 'what's sauce for

the goose is sauce for the gander,' as I reckon you've heard. Don't you want to give your husband a pleasant s'prise?"

"Oh, don't I!"

"Well, I'm kind o' feared to ask you, after seein' all these fine things; but you said you was brought up in the country. Can you cook?"

"Indeed I can! I've cooked all our meals at home since we were married — except those that Phil prepared."

"Good! Well, there's self-raisin' flour an' all sorts o' groceries in the store, an' eggs an' butter in the store cellar, an' alongside of the warehouse there's an ice-house, with three or four kinds o' meat. We have to take all sorts o' things in trade from country customers, an' some of 'em won't keep without ice. Now, if you was to s'prise your husband with a home-made supper, he wouldn't have to go down to the hotel, an' mebbe your own heart wouldn't break not to have to eat down there again."

"Oh, Mr. Wright! You're a genius! I wonder whether I could manage the kitchen stove."

"Best way to find out's to take a look at it."

Grace followed the suggestion. Caleb explained the draught and dampers, and took Grace's orders, saying, as he departed: —

"Doc'll keep him in the store till I get back, — that's what he's there for, — an' I'll keep him afterwards. When you want him, pull this rope: it starts an alarm in my room, over the store, an' I'll hear it."

Doctor Taggess gave Philip some health counsel, at great length. Claybanks and the surrounding country was very malarious, he said, and newcomers, especially healthy young people from the East, could not be too careful about diet, dress, and general habits until entirely acclimatized. Then he got upon some of his hobbies, and Philip thought the conversation might be very entertaining if Grace and the new home were not within a moment's walk. No sooner had the Doctor departed than Caleb insisted on a decision regarding an account that was in dispute, because the debtor was likely to come in at any moment, and the matter was very important. He talked

details until Philip was almost crazed with impatience, but suddenly a muffled whir caused Caleb to say abruptly: —

"But it's better for him to suffer than for your wife to do it; an' if you don't be ready to start her for supper the minute the hotel bell rings, you won't get the best pickin's."

Philip escaped with great joy, and a minute later was in his new sitting room and staring in amazement at a neatly set table, with Grace at the head of it, and upon it an omelette, a filet of beef, some crisp fried potatoes, tea-buscuits, cake, and a pot of coffee. After seating himself and bowing his head a moment, he succeeded in saying: —

"'How did you? — how could you?' as you said to me."

"How could I help it," Grace replied, "after the delicate hint you left behind you, — the kettle boiling on the stove?"

"My dear girl, like little George Washington, I cannot tell a lie. Caleb was responsible for that tea-kettle; he brought it from the store, and said something poetical about the singing of a kettle being music to a woman's ear."

"Caleb did that?" exclaimed Grace, springing from her chair. "Set another place, please!" Then she dashed through the darkness, into the store, and exclaimed:—

"Mr. Wright, I shan't eat a single mouthful until you come down and join us. Lock the store — quick — before things get cold."

"Your word's law, I s'pose," said Caleb, locking the front door, "but—"

"'But me no buts,'" Grace said, taking his hand and making a true "home run." Caleb seated himself awkwardly, looked around him, and said:—

"Hope you asked a blessin' on all this?"

"I never ate a meal without one," Philip replied.

"Reckon you'll get along, then," said Caleb, looking relieved and engulfing half of a tea-biscuit.

V — BUSINESS WAYS

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PHILIP engaged a plumber from the nearest city and had one of his upper chambers transformed into a bath-room, and Caleb, by special permission, studied every detail of the work and went into so brown a study of the general subject that Philip informed Grace that either the malarial soaking, mentioned in Uncle Jethro's letter, had reached the point of saturation, or that the Confederate bullet had found a new byway in its meanderings.

But Caleb was not conscious of anything out of the usual — except the bath-room. By dint of curiosity and indirect questioning he learned that in New York Philip and his wife had bathed daily. Afterward he talked bathing with the occasional commercial travellers who reached Claybanks — men who seemed "well set up," despite some distinct signs of bad

habits, and learned that men of affairs in the great city thought bathing quite as necessary as eating. He talked to Doctor Taggess on the subject, and was told in reply that, in the Doctor's opinion, cleanliness was not only next to godliness, but frequently an absolute prerequisite to cleanly longings and a clean life.

So one day, after a fortnight of self-abstraction, he announced to Philip that a bath-room ought to be regarded as a means of grace.

"Quite so," assented Philip, "but I wish it weren't so expensive at the start. Do you know what that bath-room, with its tank, pump, drain, etc., has cost? The bill amounts to about a hundred and fifty dollars, and it can't be charged to my account for six months, like most of our purchases for the store."

"That so?" drawled Caleb, carelessly, though in his heart he was delighted; for Philip had also engaged from the city a paper-hanger, and he had employed a local painter to do a lot of work; and Caleb, who knew the business ways of country stores, had trembled for the bills, yet doubted his right to speak of them. "Well, have you got the money to pay for it?"

"Yes, but not much more; and in the two weeks I've been here the store has taken in about forty dollars in cash."

"That's about it, I b'lieve. Well, realizin'-time is comin'; it's right at hand, in fact, an' I've wanted a chance to have a good long talk with you 'bout it. When I was a boy I used to lie on my back in the woods for hours at a time, catchin' backaches an' rheumatiz for the sake of watchin' the birds makin' their nests an' startin' their house-keepin'. Watchin' you an' your wife gettin' to rights has made me feel just like I did in them days — except for the backaches and rheumatiz. I wouldn't have pestered the birds for a hull farm, an' I hain't wanted to pester you, but the quicker you can give more 'tention to the business, the better 'twill be for your pocket."

"Why, Mr. Wright —"

"Call me Caleb, won't you? Ev'rybody else does, 'xcept you an' your wife, an' I can talk straighter when I ain't 'mistered.'"

"Thank you, good friend, for the permission. I'll take it, if you'll call me Philip."

"That's a bargain," said Caleb, with visible

signs of relief. "Well, as I was sayin', the more time you can give the business, the better 'twill be for your pocket. Your uncle kept first place in this town an' county, an' you need to do the same, if you want to keep your mind easy about other things. I've said all sorts of good things about you to the customers, though I haven't stretched the truth an inch. They all think you bright, but you need to show 'em that you're sharp too, else they'll do their best to dull you. Business is business, you know; likewise, human nature's human nature."

"Correct! Go on."

"Well, I'm doin' my best to keep an eye on ev'rythin' an' ev'rybody, but I'm not boss. Besides, it took two of us to do it all when your uncle was alive, though he was about as smart as they make 'em. There's one thing you won't have no trouble about, an' that's beatin' down. This is the only strictly one-price store in the county, an' it saves lots o' time by keepin' away the slowest, naggiest traders. It might ha' kept away some good customers, too, if your uncle hadn't been a master hand at gettin' up new throw-ins."

"Throw-ins? What are they?"

"What? You brought up in the country, an' not know what a 'throw-in' is? Why, when a man buys somethin', he gen'rally says, 'What ye goin' to throw in?' That means, 'What are you goin' to give me for comin' here instead of buyin' somewhere else?' When it's stuff for clothes, there's no trouble, for any merchant throws in thread and buttons to make it up if it's men's goods, or thread an' hooks an' eyes if it's women's. Up at Bustpodder's store they throw in a drink o' whiskey whenever a man buys anythin' that costs a quarter or more, an' it draws lots o' trade; but your uncle never worked for drinkin' men's trade, unless for cash, so we've never kept liquor, but that made him all the keener to get other throw-ins. One year 'twas wooden pipes for men, an' little balls of gum-camphor for women. Then 'twas hair-ile for young men an' young women. Whatever 'twas, 'twas sure to be somethin' kind o' new, an' go-to-the-spotty. Shouldn't wonder if your wife, havin' been in a big store, might think of a lot o' new throw-ins for women-folks. But that's only a beginnin'."

"H'm! Now tell me everything I ought to do that I haven't been doing."

"Well, in the first place, when you meet a customer, you want to get a tight grip on him, somehow, 'fore he leaves. Then you want to get into your mind how much each one owes you, an' ask when he's goin' to begin to bring in his produce. None of the men on our books mean to be dishonest; but if you don't keep 'em in mind of their accounts at this time o' year, some of 'em may sell their stuff to somebody else for cash, an' country folks with cash in their pockets is likely to think more of what they'd like to buy than what they owe. I reckon, from some things I've heerd, that some city folks are that way too."

"Quite likely. Well?"

"Well, if say a dozen of your biggest country customers sell for cash an' don't bring you the money, you'll find yourself in a hole about your own bills, for some of your customers are on the books for three or four hundred apiece. Your uncle sold 'em all he could, for he knew their ways an' that he could bring 'em to time."

"H'm! Suppose they fail to pay after having been trusted a full year, isn't the law good for anything?"

"Oh, yes; but sue a customer an' you lose a customer, an' there ain't any too many in this county, at best. Now, your uncle made sure, before he died, about all of 'm whose principal crop was wheat; but the wheat's then brought in an' sold, an' most of the money for it, after his own bills were paid, was in the check the lawyers sent you. The rest of the customers raised mostly corn an' pork, — most gen'rally both, for the easiest way to get corn to market is to put it into pork; twenty bushels o' corn, weighin' over a thousan' poun's, makes two hundred pound o' pork, an' five times less haulin'; besides, pork's always good for cash, but sometimes you can't hardly give corn away. Queer about corn; lot's o' folks that's middlin' sensible about a good many things seems to think that corn's only fit to feed to hogs an' niggers. Why, some o' 'em's made me so touchy about it that I've took travellin' business men up into my room, over the store, an' give 'em a meal o' nothin' but corn an' pork,

worked up in half a dozen ways, an' it seemed as if they couldn't eat enough, but I couldn't see that the price o' corn went up afterwards. I'd like to try a meal o' that kind on you an' your wife some day. If the world took as easy to corn when it's ground into meal as when it's turned into whiskey, this section o' country would get rich."

"I shouldn't wonder if it would. But what else?"

"Well, you must get a square up-an'-down promise from each o' your customers that their pork's to come to you, you promisin' to pay cash, at full market price, for all above the amount that's owed you. You must have the cash ready, too."

"But where am I to get it?"

"Why, out of the first pork you can get in an' ship East or South. You must be smart enough to coax some of 'em to do their killin' the first week the roads freeze hard enough to haul a full load. They'll all put it off, hopin' to put a few more pounds o' weight on each hog, an' that mebbe the price'll go up a little."

"But how am I to coax them?"

"Well, there's about as many ways as customers. I'll put you up to the nature of the men, as well as I can, an' help you other ways all I can, but you must do the rest; for, as I said before, you're boss, an' they're all takin' your measure, agin next year an' afterwards. As to ways o' coaxin', — well, the best is them that don't show on their face what they be. Your uncle held one slippery customer tight by pertendin' to be mighty fond o' the man's only son, who was the old fellow's idol. Your uncle got the boy a book once in a while, an' spent lots o' spare moments answerin' the youngster's questions, for your uncle knew a lot about a good many things. There was another customer that thought all money spent on women's clothes was money throwed away — p'raps 'twas 'cause his wife was more'n ordinary good-lookin', an' liked to show off. One year, in one of our goods boxes from the East, was a piece of silk dress-goods that would have put your eyes out. Black silk was the only kind that ever came here before, and it had always been satisfyin'. Next to plenty o' religion and gum-camphor, a black silk dress is what ev'ry

self-respectin' woman in the county hankers for most. Well, your uncle never showed that blue an' white an' yaller an' purple an' red silk to nobody till about this time o' year; he told me not to, too, but one day, when the feller's wife was in town, an' warmin' her feet at the back-room stove, your uncle took that silk in there an' showed it, an' he see her eyes was a-devourin' it in less than a minute.

"'There's only enough of it for one dress,' said he, 'an' I ain't sure I could get any more like it. You're the style o' woman that would set it off, so you'd better take it before somebody else snaps it up.'

"'Take it?' said she, lookin' all ways to once; 'why, if I was to have that charged, my husband would go plum crazy, or else he'd send me to an asylum.'

"'Not a bit of it!' said your uncle. 'Tell you what I'll do; I'll lay that silk away, an' not show it to anybody till your husban' brings me in his pork an' we have our settlement. You come with him, an' I'll wrap up the silk for you, an' if he objects to payin' for it — oh, I know his ways, but I tell you right here, that

if he objects to payin' for it, I'll make you a present of it, an' you can lay all the blame on me, sayin' I pestered you so hard that you had to take it.' Well, your uncle got the pork; the wife gave the man no peace till he promised to fetch it here, an' she got the dress, an' her husband — Hawk Howlaway, his name was, — was so tickled that he told all the county how he got the best of old Jethro."

"Pretty good — for one year, if the dress didn't cost too much."

"It only cost seventy cents a yard, an' there was fifteen yards of it. The pork netted more'n four hundred dollars. But that wa'n't the end of it. The woman hadn't wore the dress to church but one Sunday when her husband came into the store one day an' hung 'round a spell, lookin' 'bout as uneasy as a sinner under conviction, an' at last he winked your uncle into the back room, an' says Howlaway, says he: —

"'Jethro, you've got me in a heap o' trouble, 'cause of that silk dress you loaded on to my wife. She looks an' acts as if my Sunday clothes wasn't good enough to show alongside

of it, an' other folks looks an' acts so too. So, Jethro, you've got to help me out. I've got to have some new clothes, an' they've got to be just so, or they won't do.' Your uncle said, 'All right,' an' got off a line from an advertisement in a city paper, about 'No fit, no pay.' Then he wrote to a city clothin' store for some samples of goods, an' for directions how to measure a man for a suit of clothes. Oh, he was a case, your uncle was; why, I do believe he'd ha' took an order from an angel for a new set of wing-feathers an' counted on gettin' the goods some way. I don't say he made light of it, though. I never see him so close-minded as he was for the next two weeks. One day I chaffed him a little about wastin' a lot o' time on a handsome hardware-goods drummer that hadn't much go, an' whose prices was too high anyway; but your uncle said:—

"'He's just about the height and build of Hawk Howlaway, an' he knows how to wear his clothes.' Then I knowed what was up. Well, to make a long story short, the clothes come, in the course o' time, and on an app'inted day Howlaway come too, lookin' about as wish-

I-could-hide as a gal goin' to be married. Your uncle stuck up four lookin'-glasses on the back room wall, one over another, an' then he turned Howlaway loose in the room, with the clothes, an' a white shirt with cuffs an' collar on it, an' told him to lock himself in an' go to work, an' to pound on the door if he got into trouble. In about ten minutes he pounded, an' your uncle went in, an' Hawk was lookin' powerful cocky, though he said: —

"'There's somethin' that ain't quite right, though I don't know what 'tis.'

"'It's your hair — an' your beard,' said your uncle. 'Now, Hawk, you slip out o' them clothes, an' go down to Black Sam, that does barberin', an' tell him you want an all-round job: 't'll only cost a quarter. But wait a minute,' an' with that your uncle hurried into the store, took out of the cash-drawer a picture that he'd cut out of a paper that he'd been studyin' pretty hard for a week, took it back, an' said, 'Take this along, an' tell the barber it's about the style you want.'

"Well, when Hawk saw his own face in the glass after that reapin', he hardly knowed him-

self, an' he sneaked into the store by climbin' the fence an' knockin' at the back door, for fear of havin' to be interdooced to any neighbors that might be hangin' 'round the counters. Then he made another try at the clothes, an' called your uncle in again, and said: —

"'They looked all right until I put my hat on, an' then somethin' went wrong again.'

"'Shouldn't wonder if 'twas your hat,' said your uncle, comin' back for a special hat an' a pair of Sunday shoes, all Howlaway's size, that he'd ordered with the clothes. He took 'em in an' said: —

"'When you start to dress like a gentleman, to stand 'longside of a lady, you want to go the whole hog or none.'

"Well, — I didn't know this story was so long when I begun to tell it, — Hawk sneaked the clothes home, an' it come out in the course o' time that when on Sunday mornin' he dressed up an' showed off to his wife, she kissed him for the first time in three year, which sot him up so that he had the courage to go to church without first loadin' up with whiskey, as he'd expected to, to nerve him up to be looked at

in his new things, an' when hog-killin' an' settlement time came round again, Hawk brought his pork to us, an' when he found his wife's silk dress hadn't been charged to him, he said in a high an' mighty way that he reckoned that until he was dead or divorced he could afford to pay for his own wife's duds, hearin' which, your uncle, who'd already socked the price of the dress onto the price of Hawk's own clothes, smiled out o' both sides of his mouth, an' all the way round to the back of his neck. An' since then, Hawk's always brought his pork to us, an' got a new silk dress ev'ry winter for his wife, an' new Sunday clothes for himself, an' nobody would he buy of but your uncle. Let's see; what was we talkin' 'bout when I turned off onto this story?"

"We were talking of ways of cajoling customers into paying their year's bills," said Philip. "Apparently I ought, just as a starter, to know how to coddle customer's boys, and supply hair-cutting and shaving plans to the village barber, and to play wife against husband, and learn to measure a man for clothes, like a —"

"That's so," said Caleb, "an' you can't be too quick about that, either, for Hawk'll want a new suit pretty soon."

"Anything else? By the way: what you said about the need of ready money reminds me of some questions I've been intending to ask, but forgotten. There are some mortgages in the safe on which interest will be due on the first of the year, — only a fortnight off. 'Twill aggregate nearly a thousand dollars."

"Yes, — when you get it, but interest's the slowest pay of all, in these parts, unless you work an' contrive for it. They know you won't foreclose on 'em; for while the security's good enough if you let it alone, there ain't an estate in the county that would fetch the face of its mortgage under the hammer. Besides, a merchant gen'rally dassent foreclose a mortgage, unless it's agin some worthless shack of a man. Folks remember it agin him, an' he loses some trade."

"Then those mortgages are practically worthless?"

"Oh, no. The money's in 'em, principal an' int'rest in full, — but the holder's got to know

how to git it out. That's the difference between successful merchants and failures."

"H'm — I see. Apparently country merchants should be, like the disciples, as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves."

"That's it in a nutshell. I reckon any fool could make money in the store business if there was nothin' to do but weigh an' measure out goods an' take in ready cash for 'em. But there ain't no ready money in this county, 'xcept what the merchants get in for the produce they send out. There ain't no banks, so the store-keepers have to be money-lenders, an' have money in hand to lend; for while there's some borrowers that can be turned off, there's some it would never do to say 'No' to, if you wanted further dealin's with 'em, for they'd feel as if they'd lost their main dependence, an' been insulted besides. Why, some of our customers come in here Saturdays an' get a few five an' ten cent pieces, on credit like any other goods, so's their families can have somethin' to put in the plate in church on Sunday."

"But there are rentals due from several

farms, and from houses in town. Are they as hard to collect as interest on mortgages?"

"Well, no — oh, no. The rent of most of the farms is payable in produce; there's ironclad written agreements, recorded in the county clerk's office, that the renters shan't sell any of their main crops anywhere else until the year's rent is satisfied. One of 'em pays by clearin' five acre of woodland ev'ry winter, an' gettin' it under cultivation in the spring, and another has to do a certain amount of ditchin' to drain swampy places. You'll have to watch them two fellers close, or they'll skimp their work, for there's nothin' farmers hate like clearin' an' ditchin'. I don't blame 'em, either."

"And the houses in town?"

"Oh, they're all right. The man in one of 'em, at two dollars a month, cuts all the firewood for the store an' house; that about balances his bill. Another house, at three thirty-three a month, has a cooper in it; he pays the rent, an' all of the stuff he buys at the store, in barrels for us in the pork-packin' season. The three an' a-half a month house man works out his rent in the pork-house durin' the

winter, an' the four dollar house has your insurance agent in it; there's always a little balance in his favor ev'ry year. The —"

"Caleb!" exclaimed Philip, "wait a minute; do you mean to tell me that houses in Claybanks rent as low as four dollars, three and a half, three and a third, and even as low as two dollars a month?"

"That's what I said. Why, the highest rent ever paid in this town was six dollars a month. The owner tried to stick out for seventy-five a year, but the renter wouldn't stand the extra twenty-five cents a month."

Philip put his face in his hands, his elbows on his knees, and said: —

"Six dollars a month! And in New York I paid twenty-five dollars a month for five rooms, and thought myself lucky!"

"Twenty — five — dollars — a month!" echoed Caleb. "Why, if it's a fair question, how much money did you make?"

"Eighty dollars a month, with a certainty of a twenty per cent increase every year. 'Twasn't much, but I was sure of getting it. From what you've been telling me, I'm not

absolutely sure of anything whatever here, unless I do a lot of special and peculiar work — and after I've earned the money by delivering the goods."

"Well, your uncle averaged somethin' between three an' four thousan', clear, ev'ry year, an' he come by it honestly, too, but there's no denyin' that he had to work for it. From seven in the mornin' to nine at night in winter; five in the mornin' till sundown in summer, to say nothin' of watchin' the pork-house work till all hours of the night throughout the season — a matter o' two months. He always went to sleep in church Sunday mornin', but the minister didn't hold it agin him. That reminds me: your uncle was a class-leader, an' the brethren are quietly sizin' you up to see if you can take the job where he left off. I hope you'll fetch."

"Thank you, Caleb," said Philip, closing his eyes as if to exclude the prospect. "But tell me," he said a moment later, "why my uncle did so much for so little. Don't imagine that I underrate three or four thousand dollars a year, but — money is worth only what it really brings

or does. That's the common-sense view of the matter, isn't it?"

"Yes; I can't see anythin' the matter with it."

"But uncle got nothing for his money but ordinary food, clothes, and shelter, and seems to have worked as hard as any overworked laborer."

"Well, I reckon he was doin' what the rest of us do in one way or other; he was countin' on what there might be in the future. He b'lieved in a good time comin'."

"Yes, — in heaven, perhaps, but not here."

"That's where you're mistaken, for he did expect it here — right here, in Claybanks."

Philip looked incredulous, and asked: —

"From what?"

"Well, he could remember when Chicago was as small as Claybanks is now, an' had a good deal more swamp land to the acre, too — an' now look at it! He'd seen St. Paul an' Minneapolis when both of 'em together could be hid in a town as big as Claybanks — but now look at 'em!"

"But St. Paul and Minneapolis had an im-

mense water-fall and water-power to attract millers of many kinds."

"Well, hain't we got a crick? They calculate that with a proper dam above town, we'd have water-power nine months every year, an' there ain't nothin' else o' the kind within fifty mile. Then there's our clay banks that the town was named after; they're the only banks of brick clay in the state; ev'rywhere else folks has to dig some feet down for clay to make bricks, so we ought to make brick cheaper'n any other town, an' supply all the country round — when we get a railroad to haul 'em out. They're not as red as some, bein' really brown, but they're a mighty sight harder'n any red brick, so they're better for foundations an' for walls o' big buildings. Chicago didn't have no clay banks nor water-power, but just look at her now! All that made her was her bein' the first tradin' place in the neighborhood; well, so's Claybanks, an' it's been so for forty year or more, too, so its time must be almost come. Your uncle 'xpected to see it all in his time, but, like Moses, he died without the sight.

Why, there's been three or four railroads surveyed right through here — yes, sir!"

"Is there any Western town that couldn't say as much, I wonder?" Philip asked.

"Mebbe not, but they hain't all got clay banks an' a crick; not many of 'em's got eleven hundred people in forty year, either. An' say — it's all right for you to talk this way with me — askin' questions an' so on, an' wonderin' if the place'll ever 'mount to anythin', but don't let out a bit of it to anybody else — not for a farm. You might's well be dead out here as not to believe in the West with all your might, an' most of all in this part of it."

"Thank you; I'll remember."

Then Philip went out and walked slowly about the shabby village until he found himself in the depths of the blues.

VI — THE UNEXPECTED

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"*THE* nicer half of the You-I seems buried in contemplation this morning," said Philip at his breakfast table, the Saturday before Christmas.

"The home-half of the You-I," Grace replied, after a quick rally from a fit of abstraction, "was thinking that it saw very little of the store-half this week, except when she went to the store to look for it. Was business really so exacting, or was it merely absorbing?"

"'Twas both, dear girl," said Philip, wishing he might repeat to her all that Caleb had said to him as recorded in the preceding chapter, and then scolding himself for the wish.

"I wonder," Grace said, "whether you know you often look as if you were in serious trouble?"

"Do I? I'm sorry you noticed it, but now that it's over, I don't object to telling you that if a single money package had arrived six hours later than it did, the principal general store of this county would have taken second or third place in the public esteem."

"Phil! Was it so large a sum?"

"Oh, no; merely two hundred dollars, but without it I would have had to decline to buy two or three wagon-loads of dressed hogs."

"'Dressed hogs'! What an expression!"

"Quite so; still, 'tis the meatiest one known in this part of the country. I can't say, however, that 'tis an ideal one for use when ladies are present, so I beg to move the previous question. What was it?"

"'Twas that I've seen very little of you this week except when I've been to the store to look for you. Won't the business soon be easier, as you become accustomed to it, so we may have our evenings together once more?"

"I hope so," said Philip.

"You didn't say that as if you meant it."

"Didn't I? Well, dear girl, to-morrow will be Sunday, and you shall have every moment

of my time, and 'I shall bathe my weary soul in seas of heavenly rest,' as Caleb frequently sings to himself."

"You poor fellow! You need more help in the store, if you don't wish to become worn out."

"I don't see how any one could assist me. Caleb is everything he should be, but he has given me to understand that everything really depends upon the proprietor, and the more I learn of the business, the more plainly I see that he is right."

Grace asked a few questions, and after Philip had answered them he exclaimed:—

"You artful, inquisitive, dreadful woman! You've dragged out of me a lot of things that I'd determined you shouldn't know, for I've always had an utter contempt for men who inflict their personal troubles upon their wives. But you can imagine from what I've told you that no one but a partner could relieve me of any of my work."

"Then why not teach your partner the business?"

"'Twill be time to do that when I get one."

"Don't be stupid, Phil," Grace said, rising from her chair, going to her husband, and bestowing a little pinch and a caress. "Don't you know who I mean?"

"Dear girl," said Philip, "you're quite as clever as I, — which is no compliment, — and everybody adores you. But the idea of your dickering by the hour with farmers and other countrymen — and dickering is simply the soul of our business — is simply ridiculous."

"I don't see why," Grace replied, with a pout, followed by a flash in her deep brown eyes. "Some of the farmers' wives 'dicker,' as you call it, quite as sharply as their husbands. Am I stupider than they?"

"No — no! What an idea! But — they've been brought up to it."

"Which means merely that they've learned it. What women have done woman can do. I hope I'm not in the way in the store when you're talking business?"

"In the way! You delicious hypocrite!"

"Well, I've listened a lot for business' sake, instead of merely for fun. Besides, I do get dreadfully lonesome in the house at times,

in spite of a little work and a lot of play — at the piano. Oh, that reminds me of something. Prepare to be startled. A great revival effort is to begin at the church to-morrow night, and a committee of two, consisting of Caleb and Mr. Grateway, the minister, have been to me to know — guess what they wanted."

"H'm! I shouldn't wonder if they wanted you to promise to sit beside the minister, so that all the susceptible young men might be coaxed to church and then shaken over the pit and dragged into the fold. Caleb and the minister have long heads."

"Don't be ridiculous! What they ask is that you'll have our piano moved to the church, and that you'll play the music for the hymns. There's to be a lot of singing, and the church hasn't any instrumental music, you know, and Caleb has been greatly impressed by your playing."

"Well, I'll be — I don't know what. Old fools! I wish they'd asked me direct! They'd have got a sharp, unmistakable 'NO!'"

"So they said; that was the reason they came to me."

"And you said—"

"That I'd consult you, and that if for any reason you felt that you must decline, I would play for them."

"Grace — Somerton!"

"Why shouldn't I? I often played the melodeon for the choir in our village church before I went to New York."

"Did you, indeed? But I might have imagined it, for there seems to be nothing that you can't do, or won't attempt. But let us see where we are. You've promised, practically, that they shall have the music; if I decline to play, they'll think I'm stuck up, or something of which, for business' sake, I can't afford to be suspected. Besides, when I married you I made some vows that weren't in the service, and one of them was that I never would shift any distasteful duty upon my wife. On the other hand, these Methodists are a literal lot of people. They've wanted me to become a class-leader because Uncle Jethro was one. I believe the duties are to inflict spiritual inquisition every Sunday upon specified people in the presence of one another. I escaped only by

explaining that I was not a member of their denomination. But give them an inch and they'll take an ell. If I play for them that night, they'll expect me to do it the next, and again and again, probably every Sunday, and I certainly shan't have our piano jogged once a week over frozen roads, with the nearest tuner at a city seventy-five miles away."

"Then let me tell them that you won't allow them to be disappointed, but that as you've not been accustomed to play for church singing, and I have, that I will play for them."

"That means that every one in the church will stare at you, which will make your husband feel wretchedly uncomfortable. Aside from that, you'll distract attention from the minister; so although I know that you personally are a means of grace — Grace, itself, indeed, ha, ha! — the effect of the sermon won't be worth any more than a bag of corn-husks."

"Oh, Phil! don't imagine that everybody sees me through your eyes. Besides, except while playing I shall sit demurely on a front bench, with my back to the congregation."

So Caleb and the minister were rejoiced, and spread the announcement throughout the town, and Grace rehearsed the church's familiar airs to all the hymns on the list which the minister gave her, though some of them she had to learn by ear, by the assistance of Caleb, who whistled them to her. Soon after dark on Sunday night six stalwart sinners, carefully selected by Caleb, exulted in the honor of carrying the little upright piano to the church, where they remained so as to be sure of seats from which to hear the music.

The Methodist church edifice in Claybanks could seat nearly three hundred people and give standing room to a hundred more. Seldom had it been filled to its extreme capacity; but when the opening hymn was "given out" on the night referred to, the building was crowded to the doors and a hundred or more persons outside begged and demanded that windows and doors should remain open during the singing. Pastor Grateway, who had been in the ministry long enough to make the most of every opportunity, improved this occasion to announce that according to custom in

all churches possessing instruments, the music of each hymn would be played before the singing began. Grace, quite as uncomfortable as her husband would have been in her place, was nevertheless familiar with the music and the piano, and the congregation rose vociferously to the occasion. Even the sinners sang, and one back-seat ruffian, who had spent a winter in a city and frequented concert saloons, became so excited as to applaud at the end of the first hymn, for which he was promptly tossed through an open window by his more decorous comrades.

The hymn after the prayer was equally effective, so the minister interpolated still another one after the scripture reading called the "second lesson." He, too, had been uplifted by the music — so much uplifted that he preached more earnestly than usual and also more rapidly, so as to reach the period of "special effort." At the close of the sermon he said: —

"As we sing the hymn beginning 'Come, ye Sinners, Poor and Needy,' let all persons who wish to flee from the wrath to come, and

desire the prayers of true believers, come forward and kneel at the mourners' bench."

The hymn was sung, and two or three persons approached the altar and dropped upon their knees. As the last verse was reached, Caleb whispered to the minister, who nodded affirmatively; then he whispered to Grace, who also nodded; then he found Philip, who was seated near the front, to be within supporting distance of his wife, and whispered: —

"Give your wife a spell for a minute; play 'Am I a Soldier of the Cross' the way you did the other day for me. That'll fetch 'em!"

Philip frowned and refused, but Caleb snatched his hand in a vise-like grasp and fairly dragged him from his seat. Half angry, half defiant, yet full of the spirit of any man who finds himself "in for it," whatever "it" may be, Philip dropped upon the piano stool which Grace had vacated, and attacked the keys as if they were sheaves of wheat and he was wielding a flail. He played the music as he had played it to Caleb, with the accent and swing of a march, yet with all the runs and

variations with which country worshippers are wont to embroider it, and the hearers were so "wrought up" by it that they began the hymn with a roaring "attack" that was startling even to themselves. Grace, seeing no seat within reach, and unwilling to turn her back to the people, retired to one end of the piano, under one of the candles, from which position, on the raised platform in front of the pulpit, she beheld a spectacle seldom seen in its fulness except by ministers during a time of religious excitement — a sea of faces, many of them full of the ecstacy of faith and anticipation, others wild with terror at the doom of the impenitent.

Like most large-souled women, Grace was by nature religious and extremely sympathetic, and unconsciously she looked pityingly and beseechingly into many of the troubled faces. Her eyes rested an instant, unconsciously, on those of one of the stalwart sinners who had brought the piano to the church. In a second the man arose, strode forward, and dropped upon his knees. Grace looked at another, — for the six were together on one bench, — and

he, too, came forward. Then a strange tumult took possession of her; she looked commandingly at the others in succession, and in a moment the entire six were on their knees at the altar.

"Great hell!" bellowed the ruffian who had been tossed through the window, into which he had climbed halfway back in his eagerness to hear the music. Then he tumbled into the church, got upon his feet, and hurried forward to join the other sinners at the mourners' bench, which had already become so crowded that Caleb was pressing the saints from the front seats to make room for coming penitents.

The hymn ended, but Philip did not know it, so he continued to play. Grace whispered to him, and when he had reached the last bar, which he ended with a crash, he abruptly seated himself on the pulpit steps and felt as if he had done something dreadful and been caught in the act. Grace reseated herself at the instrument; and as the minister, with the class leaders, Sunday-school teachers, and other prominent members of the church were moving

among the penitents, counselling and praying, and the regular order of song and prayer had been abandoned or forgotten, she played the music of the hymns that had been designated by the minister on the previous day. Some of the music was plaintive, some spirited, but she played all with extreme feeling, whether the people sang or merely listened. She played also all newer church music that had appealed to her in recent years, and when, at a very late hour, the congregation was dismissed, she suddenly became conscious of the most extreme exhaustion she had ever known. As she and her husband were leaving the church, one of the penitents approached them and said: —

"Bless the Lord for that pianner — the Lord an' you two folks."

"Amen!" said several others.

Philip and Grace walked home in silence; but when they were within doors, Philip took his wife's hands in his, held them apart, looked into Grace's eyes, which seemed to be melting, and exclaimed: —

"Grace Somerton — my wife — a revivalist!"

"Is Saul also among the prophets?" Grace retorted, with a smile which seemed to her husband entirely new and peculiar. "It was your music that started the — what shall I call it?"

VII — AN ACTIVE PARTNER

THE piano remained at the church several days, for the revival effort was too successful to be discontinued. Night after night Grace played for saints and sinners, and the minister, who was far too honest to stretch the truth for the sake of a compliment, told her that the playing drew more penitents than his prayers and sermons. Caleb remained faithful to his duties at the store every day, but the sound of the church bell in the evening made him so manifestly uneasy, and eager to respond, that Philip volunteered to look after all customers and loungers who might come in before the customary time for closing. But customers and loungers were few; for the church was temporarily the centre of interest to all of the good and bad whose evenings were free. There was no other place for Philip himself to go after the store was

closed, for was not his wife there? Besides, the work soon began to tell on Grace; for the meetings were long, and the air of the tightly packed little church became very stifling, so Philip sometimes relieved Grace so that she might go to the door for fresh air.

"Do you know what you two have done, with your pianner-playin'?" asked Caleb, when the revival concluded. "You've not only snatched a lot of sinners that have been dodgin' ev'rybody else for years, but folks is so grateful to you that four or five customers of other stores are goin' to give you their trade the comin' year. I was sure 'twould work that way, but I didn't like to tell you."

"I'm glad you didn't; for if you had, the music would have stopped abruptly. There are places to draw the line in advertising one's business, — my business, — and the church is one of them."

"Good! That's just the way I thought you'd feel, but I'm mighty glad to know it for sure. Church singin' 'll be mighty dismal, though, when you take that pianner back home."

As Caleb spoke, he looked beseechingly at Philip, who utterly ignored the look and maintained an impassive face. Then Caleb transferred his mute appeal to Grace, who looked troubled and said: —

"There ought to be some way out of it."

"Where there's a will, there's a way," Caleb suggested.

Philip frowned, then laughed, and said: —

"Suppose you think up a way — but don't let there be any delay about getting the piano back to the house."

"Well, it's a means of grace at the church."

"So it is at home, and I need all the means of grace I can get, particularly those that are nearest home, while I am breaking myself in to a new business."

Caleb had the piano brought back to the parlor, but he reverted to it again and again, in season and out of season, until Philip told Grace that there was no doubt that his uncle was right when he wrote that Caleb would sometimes insist on being helped with projects of his own.

"That wasn't all," Grace replied. "He

wrote also that he advised you to give Caleb his way at such times, or your life would be made miserable until you did, and that the cost of Caleb's projects would not be great."

"H'm! I wonder if uncle knew the cost of a high-grade upright piano? Besides, I need all my time and wits for the business, and Caleb's interruptions about that piano are worrying the life out of me. To make matters worse, there's a new set of commercial travellers coming in almost every day — this is the season, while country merchants are beginning to get money, in which they hope to make small sales for quick pay, and they take a lot of my time."

"You ought to have a partner — and you have one, you know — to see those people for you; and she will do it, if you'll let her."

"My partner knows that she may and shall do whatever she likes," said Philip, "but, dear girl, 'twould be like sending a sheep among wolves to unloose that horde of drummers upon you."

"I've had to deal with men, in some city stores in which I worked," Grace replied, "and

some of them reminded me of wolves — and other animals; but I succeeded in keeping them in their places. I know the private cost-marks on all of our goods, and I know the qualities of many kinds of goods better than you or Caleb, and both of you will be within call for consultation whenever I'm puzzled; so let me try. 'Twill give me an excuse to spend all of my spare time in the store; so whenever a drummer comes in, you can refer him to me. Say I'm the buyer for the concern. 'Twill sound big; don't you think so?"

"Indeed I do! I wonder where a young woman got such a head for business."

"Strange, isn't it," Grace replied, with dancing eyes which had also a quizzical expression, "as she's been several years behind counters, great and small, and listened to scores of buyers and drummers haggle over fractions of a cent in prices?"

"And for about that much time," said Philip, reminiscently, "her husband was a mere clerk and correspondent, yet thought himself a rising business man! Have your own way, partner — managing partner, I ought to say."

The next day was a very busy one, yet Caleb found time to say something about instrumental music as a means of grace in churches, and to get a sharp reply. Several commercial travellers came in and were astonished at being referred to a handsome, well-dressed young woman. Grace disposed of them rapidly and apparently without trouble. When husband and wife sat down to supper, Philip said: —

"How did the managing partner get along to-day?"

"I bought very little," Grace replied.

"You saved Caleb and me a lot of time. I've never seen Caleb so active and spirited as he has been this afternoon. It made me feel guilty, for I was rude to him this morning for the first time. Just when I was trying to think my hardest about something, he brought up again the subject of the church and the piano."

"Poor Caleb! But he won't do it again, for I've settled the matter."

"You've not been tender-hearted enough to give up the piano?"

"Oh, no, but I — we, I mean — have taken the county agency for a cabinet-organ firm."

"I see — e — e! And you're going to torment the church into buying one, and you and Caleb are going to get up strawberry festivals and such things to raise the money, and the upshot will be that I'll have to subscribe a lot of cash to make up the deficiency. Ah, well, peace will be cheap at — "

"Phil, dear, don't be so dreadfully previous. The bargain is that the firm shall send us, without charge, a specimen instrument, which I've promised to display to the best advantage, and I've also promised to give elementary instruction to every one who manifests interest in it."

"Grace Somerton! The house will be full from morning till night. Country people will throng about such an instrument like children about a hand-organ. 'Twill be the end of your coming into the store to talk to the drummers, or even to see me."

"Oh, Phil! Where are your wits? I'm going to have the organ kept at the church, and let the most promising would-be learners

and possible buyers do their practising there. The organ firm sells on instalments; we'll guarantee the instalments, for I'll select the buyers — who will want only smaller instruments — from among women who bring us chickens and butter and eggs and feathers and such things. So the church will be sure of an instrument more appropriate to congregational singing than a piano, and our piano won't be coveted, and we will make a little money, and by the time the next revival season arrives there will be at least a few people who can play, and perhaps some who are accustomed to closed windows and stuffy air, and won't get splitting headaches and lose five pounds of weight in a week, as I did."

"Allow me to catch my breath!" said Philip. "Give me some tea, please, quick! — no milk or sugar. I hope 'tis very strong. You've planned all this, yet there you sit, as natural and unassuming as if you'd never thought of anything but keeping house and being the sweetest wife in the world!"

"Thank you, but shouldn't sweetness have any strength and character? And what is

business for, I should like to know, but to enable women to keep house — and keep their pianos, if they have any?"

"Caleb," said Philip, on returning to the store, "I want to apologize for answering you rudely this morning about that enraging piano. I was in a hard study over — "

"Don't mention it," said Caleb, with a beatific smile. "Besides, 'Providence tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' as the Bible says in hundreds of different ways. I s'pose your wife's told you what she's done about music for the church? Je — ru — salem! Ain't she a peeler, though?"

"She is indeed — if I may assume that a 'peeler' is an incomparable combination of goodness and good sense."

"That's about the meanin' of it, in my dictionary." Then Caleb fixed his eyes inquiringly upon Philip's face and kept them there so long that Philip asked: —

"What now, Caleb?"

"Nothin'," said Caleb, suddenly looking embarrassed. "That is, nothin' that's any o' my business."

"If 'twas mine, you needn't hesitate to mention it. You and I ought to be fair and frank with each other."

"Well," said Caleb, counting with a stubby forefinger the inches on a yardstick, "I was only wonderin' — that is, I want to say that you're a good deal of a man, an' one that I'm satisfied it's safe to tie to, an' I'm mighty glad you're in your uncle's place, but — for the land's sake, how'd you come to git her?"

Philip laughed heartily, and replied: —

"As most men get wives. I asked her to marry me. First, of course, I put my best foot forward, for a long time, and kept it there."

"Of course. But didn't the other fellers try to cut you out?"

"Quite likely, for most men have eyes."

"Wa'n't any of 'em millionnaires?"

"Probably not, though I never inquired. As she herself has told you, Mrs. Somerton was a saleswoman. Millionnaires do their courting in their own set, where saleswomen can't afford to be."

"That was great luck for you, wasn't it? Are there any women like her in their set?"

"I don't doubt they think so. Mrs. Somerton says there are plenty of them in every set, rich and poor alike. As for me, — 'There's Only One Girl in the World' — you've heard the song?"

"Can't say that I have," Caleb replied, suddenly looking thoughtful, "but the idea of it's straight goods an' a yard wide. Well, sir, it's plain to me, an' pretty much ev'rybody else, that that wife o' yourn is the greatest human blessin' that ever struck these parts. Good women ain't scarce here; neither is good an' smart women. I s'pose our folks look pretty common to you, 'cause of their clothes, but they improve on acquaintance. Speakin' o' clothes — ev'rybody, even the best o' folks, fall short o' perfection in some particular, you know. The only way Mis' Somerton can ever do any harm, 'pears to me, is by always bein' so well dressed as to discourage some other women, an' makin' a lot of the gals envious an' discontented. She don't wear no di'monds nor gewgaws, I know, but for all

that, she looks, day in an' day out, as if she was all fixed for a party or Sunday-school picnic, an' — But, say, 'I shouldn't wonder if I was on dangerous ground,' as one of our recruits remarked to me at Gettysburg after most of our regiment was killed or wounded."

"Aha!" exclaimed Philip, when he rejoined his wife after the store closed for the day. "'Pride must have a fall' — that is, supposing you were proud of silencing Caleb concerning the piano. He has a torment in preparation for you, personally. He thinks you dress too handsomely — wear party clothes every day, and are likely to upset the heads of the village girls, and some women old enough to know better."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Grace, flushing indignantly. "I've absolutely no clothes but those I owned when we were poor. I thought them good enough for another season, as no one here would have seen them before, and none of them was very badly worn." She arose, stood before the chamber mirror, and said: —

"This entire dress is made of bits of others, that were two, three, or four years old, and were painfully cheap when new."

"Even if they weren't," said Philip, "they were your own, and earned by hard work, and if ever again Caleb opens his head on the subject, I'll—"

"No, you won't! I don't know what you were going to do, but please don't. Leave Master Caleb to me."

"You don't expect to reason him into believing that you're less effectively dressed than you are?"

"I expect to silence him for all time," Grace replied, again contemplating herself in the mirror, and appearing not dissatisfied with what she saw. The next day she asked Caleb which, if any, of the calicoes in the store were least salable; the cheapest, commonest stuff possible, for kitchen wear. Caleb "reckoned" aloud that the best calico was cheap enough for the store-owner's wife, but Grace persisted, so she was shown the "dead stock," — the leavings of several seasons' goods, — from which she made two selec-

tions. Caleb eyed them with disfavor, and said: —

"That purple one ain't fast color; the yaller one is knowed all over the county as the Scare-Cow calico. We might 'a' worked it off on somebody, if the first an' only dress of it we sold hadn't skeered a cow so bad that she kicked, an' broke the ankle of the gal that was milkin' her."

"Never mind, Caleb; the purple one can afford to lose some of its color, and — oh, I'll see about the other."

Three days later Grace, enveloped in a water-proof cloak, hurried through a shower from the house to the store, and on entering the back room, threw off the cloak. Caleb, who was drawing vinegar from a barrel, arose suddenly, with a half-gallon measure in his hands, and groaned to see his employer's wife, "dressed," as he said afterward, "like a queen just goin' onto a throne, though, come to think of it, I never set eyes on a queen, nor a throne, either." More deplorable still, she looked proud, and conscious, and as if demanding admiration. There was

even a suspicion of a wink as she exclaimed: —

"Be careful not to let any of that vinegar run over and splash near me, Caleb! You know the purple isn't fast color!"

"Je — ru — salem!" exclaimed Caleb, dropping the measure and its contents, which Grace escaped by tripping backward to the shelter of a stack of grain-sacks. When she emerged, with a grand courtesy followed by a long, honest laugh, Caleb continued: —

"Well, I've read of folk's bein' clothed in purple an' fine linen, but purple an' Scare-Cow knocks me flat! Dressed in 'dead stock,' from head to foot, an' yit — Hello, Philip! Come in here! Oh! You're knocked pretty flat, too, ain't you? Well, I just wanted to take back what I said the other day about some folk's clothes. I don't b'lieve a dress made of them grain-sacks would look common on her!"

"How stupid of me!" Grace exclaimed. "Why didn't I think of the grain-sacks? I might have corded the seams with heavy dark twine, or piped them with red carpet-binding."

"I don't know what cordin' an' pipin' is," said Caleb, "but after what I've seen, I can believe that you'd only need to rummage in a big rag-bag awhile to dress like a queen — or look like one."

VIII — THE PORK-HOUSE

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COLD weather and the pork-packing season had arrived, and the lower floor of Somerton's warehouse was a busier place than the store. At one side "dressed" hogs, unloaded from farmers' wagons, were piled high; in the centre a man with a cleaver lopped the heads and feet from the carcasses, and divided the remainder into hams, shoulders, and sides, which another man trimmed into commercial shape; a third packed the product in salted layers on the other side. At the rear of the room two men cut the trimmings, carefully separating the lean from the fat, and with the latter filled, once in two or three hours, some huge iron kettles which sat in a brick furnace in the corner. At similar intervals the contents of the kettles were transferred to the hopper of a large press, not unlike a

cider press, and soon an odorous wine-colored fluid streamed into a tank below, from which it was ladled through tin funnels into large, closely hooped barrels. The room was cold, despite the furnace; the walls, windows, and ceiling were reminiscent of the dust and smell of many pork-packing seasons. Early in the season Philip had dubbed the pork-packing floor "Bluebeard's Chamber," and warned his wife never to enter it. After a single glance one day, through the street door of the warehouse, Grace assured her husband that the prohibition was entirely unnecessary. She also said that she never had been fond of pork, but that in the future she would eschew ham, bacon, sausage, lard, and all other pork products.

When the sound of rapid, heavy hammering was audible in the Somerton sitting room and parlor, and when Grace asked where it came from, Philip replied, "The pork-house;" the cooper was packing barrels of sides, hams, or shoulders for shipment, or tightening the hoops of lard-barrels which were inclined to leak. When Grace wondered whence came the great flakes

of soot on table-linen which had been hung out of doors to dry, Philip replied, "The pork-house;" probably the fire in the furnace was drawing badly and smoking too much. Frequently, when she went to the store and asked Caleb where her husband was, the reply would be, "The pork-house." If Philip reached home late for a meal, and Grace asked what had kept him, he was almost certain to reply, "The pork-house," and if, as frequently occurred later in the season, he retired so late that Grace thought she had slept through half the night, he groaned, in answer to her inevitable question, "The pork-house."

Then came a day when Grace detected an unfamiliar and unpleasing odor in the house. She suspected the napkins, then the table-cloth, and examined the rug under the dining-room table for possible spots of butter. Next she inspected the kitchen, which she washed and scoured industriously for a full day. Occasionally she detected the same odor in the store, as if she had carried it with her from the house, so she examined her dresses minutely, for the odor was reminiscent of cookery of some

kind, although she had but a single dress for kitchen wear, and never wore it out of the house. She mentioned the odor to Philip, but he was unable to detect it in the air. One day it inflicted itself upon her even in church, and became so obnoxious that she spoke of it, instead of the sermon, as soon as the congregation was dismissed.

"I'm very sorry, dear girl, that you're so tormented," said Philip. "I wish I could identify the nuisance; then possibly I could find means to abate it. I know an odor is hard to describe, but do try to give me some clew to it."

"It reminds me somewhat of stale butter," Grace replied slowly, "and of some kinds of greasy pans, and of burned meat, and of parts of some tenement-house streets in the city, and some ash-cans on city sidewalks on hot summer mornings — oh, those days! — and of — I don't know what else."

"You've already named enough to show that 'tis truly disgusting and dreadful, and I do wish you and I could exchange the one of the five senses which is affected by it, for I never had much sense of smell."

By this time they were at home. Philip was unclasping his wife's cloak when Grace exclaimed suddenly: —

"There it is!"

"There what is?"

"That dreadful odor! Why, Phil, 'tis on your coat-sleeve! What, in the name of all that's mysterious — "

"That was my best coat in the city last winter, and I've never worn it here, except on Sundays."

"Then it must have taken the odor from some other garment in your closet."

Philip hurriedly brought his ordinary week-day coat to the sitting room, Grace moved it slowly, suspiciously, toward her nose, and soon exclaimed: —

"There it is — ugh! But what can it be?"

At that instant a well-known knock at the door announced Caleb, who had been invited to Sunday dinner.

"Don't be shocked, Caleb," said Philip; "we're not mending clothes on Sunday. 'Twill scarcely be an appetizer, apparently, but won't you pass this coat to and fro before

your face a moment, and detect an odor, if you can, and tell us what it is?"

Caleb took the coat, did as requested, touched the cloth with his nose, and replied: —

"The pork-house."

"What do you mean?" Philip asked, while Grace turned pale.

"It's the smell of boilin' fat, from the lard-kettles. It's powerful pervadin' of ev'rythin', specially woollen clothes, an' men's hair, when the pork-house windows an' doors are shut. It makes me mortal sick sometimes, when the malary gets a new grip on me; at such times I know a pork-house worker when I pass him in the street in the dark. To save myself from myself I used to wear an oilcloth jacket an' overalls when I worked in the pork-house — your uncle an' I used to have to put in a good many hours there. There was somethin' else I used to do too, when I got to my room, though I never dared to tell your uncle, or he'd never ha' stopped laughin' at me."

"What was it? Tell me — quick!" said Philip.

"Why, I bought a bottle of Floridy water out of the store, — it's a stuff that some of the gals use, — an' I sprinkled a little ev'ry day, mornin' an' evenin', on the carpet."

Philip hurried to a bed-chamber, and came back with Grace's cologne-bottle, the contents of which he bestowed upon the rug under the dining table.

"That ort to kill the rat," said Caleb, approvingly.

The dinner was a good one, but Grace ate sparingly, though she talked with animation and brilliancy unusual even for her, Philip imagined. For himself, he felt as he thought a detected criminal, an outcast, must feel. Excusing himself abruptly, he relieved his feelings somewhat by throwing out of doors the offending coat and the garments pertaining to it; then he threw out all the woollen garments of his wardrobe. Caleb was not due at Sunday school until three o'clock, but he excused himself an hour early. As he started, he signalled Philip in a manner familiar in the store, to follow him, and when both were outside the door, he said: —

"I reckon she needs quinine, or somethin'. Touchiness 'bout smells is a sign. I'd get Doc Taggess to come down, if I was you."

Philip thanked him for the suggestion; then he hurried to the bath-room, washed his hair and mustache, and exchanged his clothes for a thinner suit which he exhumed from a trunk. It was redolent of camphor, which he detested, but it was "all the perfumes of Araby" compared with — the pork-house. Then he rejoined Grace and made haste to officiate as assistant scullion, and also to ejaculate: —

"That infernal pork-house!"

"Don't talk of it any more to-day," Grace said, with a piteous smile.

"How can I help it, when —"

"But you must help it, Phil dear. Really you must."

Philip made haste to change the subject of conversation, and to cheer his wife and escape from his own thoughts he tried to be humorous, and finally succeeded so well that he and Grace became as merry in their little kitchen as they ever had been anywhere. Indeed, Grace recovered her spirits so splendidly that of her

own accord she recalled the pork-house, and said many amusing things about "Bluebeard's Chamber," and told how curious and jealous Philip's prohibition had made her, and Philip replied that it contained more trunkless heads than the fateful closet of Bluebeard, and that it was a treasure-house besides; for through it passed most of the store's business that directly produced money. Then he dashed at the piano and played a lot of music so lively that it would have shocked the church people had they heard it, and Grace lounged in an easy-chair, with her eyes half closed, looking the picture of dreamy contentment. Later she composed herself among the pillows of a lounge, and asked Philip to throw an afghan over her, and sit beside her, and talk about old times in the city, and then to remind her of all their newer blessings, because she wished to be very, fully, reverently grateful for them. Philip was not loath to comply with her request; for though the month's work had been very exacting and hard, he had been assured by Caleb, within twenty-four hours, that it was the largest and most profitable month of business that the

Somerton store had ever done, and that beyond a doubt the new proprietor had "caught on," and held all the old customers, and of his own ability secured several new ones, which proved that the people of the town and county "took to" him.

All this Philip repeated to Grace, who dreamily said that it was very good, and a satisfaction to have her husband prominent among men, instead of a nobody — a splendid, incomparable, adorable one, but still really a nobody, among the hundreds of thousands of men in New York. Then both of them fell to musing as the twilight deepened. Musing, twilight, and temporary relief from the strain of the week's work combined to send Philip into a gentle doze, from which he suddenly roused himself to say:—

"What are you laughing at, Miss Mischief?"

"I'm — not — laughing," Grace replied.

"Crying? My dear girl, what is the matter?"

"I'm — not — crying. I'm — merely — shivering. I'm cold."

"That's because you've a brute of a husband, who has been so wrapped up in his affairs and you that probably he has let the fire go out."

He made haste to replenish the stove and to throw over his wife a traveller's rug. Then he lighted a shaded candle, looked at the thermometer, and said: —

"How strange! The mercury stands at seventy-two degrees."

But Grace continued to shiver, and, stranger still, she felt colder as the fire burned up and additional covers were placed upon her. Finally she exclaimed: —

"Oh, Phil! I'm frightened! This is something — different from — ordinary cold. It must be some — something like — paralysis. I can't move my arms or feet."

"I'll run for Doctor Taggess at once!" said Philip; but as he started from the room, Grace half screamed, half groaned: —

"Don't leave me, if you — love me! Don't let me — die — alone!"

"At least let me go to the door and raise a shout; some one will hear me, and I'll send him for the Doctor."

As he opened the door he saw a light in the window of Caleb's room, over the store. Quickly seizing the cord of the alarm signal,

of which Caleb had previously told him, he pulled several times, and soon Caleb, finding the door ajar, entered the room.

"Won't you get the Doctor, Caleb — quick?" said Philip. "We're awfully frightened; my wife has a strange, dreadful attack of some kind. It acts like paralysis."

Caleb, glancing toward the lounge, saw the quivering covers and Grace's face.

"Poor little woman!" he said, with the voice of a woman. "But don't be frightened. 'Tisn't paralysis. It's bad enough, but it never kills. I know the symptoms as well as I know my own right hand, an' Doctor'll do more good later in the evenin' than now."

"But what is it, man?"

"Malary — fever an' ager. She's never had a chill before, I reckon?"

"No — o — o," said Grace, between chattering teeth.

"Don't wonder you was scared, then. If religion could take hold like an ager-chill, this part of the country would be a section o' kingdom-come. The mean thing about it is that it takes hardest hold of folks that's been the

healthiest. Try not to be scared, though; it won't kill, an' 'twon't last but a few minutes. Then you're likely to drop asleep, an' wake pretty soon with a hot fever an' splittin' headache; they ain't pleasant to look forward to, but they might seem worse if you didn't foresee 'em. I'll go for Doc Taggess right off; if he ain't home, his wife'll send him as soon as he comes. Taggess himself is the best medicine he carries; but if he's off somewhere, I'll come back an' tell your husband what to do. Don't be afeared to trust me; ev'ry man o' sense in this section o' country knows what to do for fever and ager; if he didn't, he'd have to go out o' business."

Caleb departed, after again saying "Poor little woman!" very tenderly. As for Philip, he took his wife's hands in his own and poured forth a torrent of sympathetic words; but when the sufferer fell asleep, he went out into the darkness and cursed malaria, the West, and the impulse which had made him become his uncle's heir. He cursed many things else, and then concentrated the remainder of his wrath into an anathema on the pork-house.

IX — A WESTERN SPECTRE

AFTER her fever had subsided, Grace went to sleep and carried into dream-land the disquieting conviction that she was to have a long period of illness, and be confined to her bed. Philip had given her the medicines prescribed and obtained by Caleb, for Doctor Taggess had gone far into the country and was not expected home until morning. Then Philip had lain awake far into the night, planning proper care for his precious invalid; finally he decided to get a trained nurse from New York, unless Doctor Taggess could recommend one nearer home. He would also get from the city a trained housekeeper; for, as already explained, there was no servant class at Claybanks, and of what use was "help" when the head of the house was too ill to direct the work? He would order from the city every cordial, every sick-room delicacy, that he

could think of, or the Doctor might suggest. Expense was not to be thought of; there was only one woman and wife in the world — to him, and she had been cruelly struck down. She should be made well, at whatever cost. Meanwhile he would write the firm by which he had been employed in New York, and beg for his old position, for the reason that the climate of Claybanks was seriously undermining his wife's health; afterward, as soon as Grace could be moved, he would take her back to the city, and give up his Claybanks property, with its train of responsibilities, privations, and miseries.

When he awoke in the morning, he slipped softly from the room, which he had darkened the night before, so that the morning light should not disturb the invalid, and he moved toward the kitchen to make a fire — a morning duty with which he had charged himself and faithfully fulfilled since his first day in his uncle's house. To be in the store by sunrise, as was the winter custom of Claybanks merchants, compelled Philip to rise before daylight, and habit, first induced by an alarm clock, had

made him wake every winter day at six, while darkness was still deep.

He was startled, therefore, when he tip-toed into the dining room, to be welcomed by a burst of sunlight. Evidently his wakefulness of the previous night had caused him to oversleep. Hurrying to the kitchen, he was again startled, for breakfast was cooking on the stove, and at the table, measuring some ground coffee into a pot, stood Grace, softly singing, as was her custom when she worked.

"What?" he exclaimed, rubbing his eyes. "Was it I who was ill, instead of you, or have I been bereft of my senses for a fortnight or more?"

"Neither, you poor, dear boy," Grace replied, though without looking up. "Yesterday I was more scared than hurt; to-day I feel as well as ever — really, I do."

Philip stepped in front of her, took her head in his hands, and looked into her face. The healthy glow peculiar to it had given place to a sickly yellow tint; her plump cheeks had flattened — almost hollowed, her eyes, always either lustrous or melting, were dull and expres-

sionless, and her lips, usually ruddy and full, were gray and thin. As her husband looked at her, she burst into tears and hid her face on his shoulder.

"I could have endured anything but that," she sobbed. "I don't think I'm vain, but it has always been so delightful to me that I could be pretty to my husband. I wasn't conceited, but I had to believe my mirror. But now — oh, I'd like to hide my face somewhere for a —"

"Would you, indeed?" murmured Philip, tenderly. "Let me hide it for you, a little at a time; I promise you that not a bit shall be neglected."

"Do let me breathe, Phil. I don't see how you can kiss a scarecrow — and continue at it."

"Don't you? I could kiss a plague-patient, or the living skeleton, if Grace Somerton's heart was in it. I don't understand your reference to a scarecrow. Your mirror must have been untruthful this morning, or perhaps covered with mist, for — see!"

So saying, he detached the late Mr. Jethro Somerton's tiny mirror from the kitchen wall

and held it before his wife, whose astonishment and delight were great as she exclaimed: —

"Phil, you're a witch! Now I'm going to make believe that there was no yesterday, and if yesterday persists in coming to mind, I shall scold myself most savagely for having been a frightened, silly child."

"You really were a very sick woman," Philip replied. "I was quite as frightened at you while the chill had possession of you, and you had a raging fever afterward. You've had headaches in other days, but yesterday's was the first that made you moan."

"'Tis very strange. I feel quite as well to-day as ever I did. Perhaps 'tis the effect of Caleb's medicine. Poor Caleb! When he saw me, I really believe he suffered as much as I."

"So it seemed to me," said Philip. "I wonder how a little, sickly, always-tired man can have so much sympathy and tenderness?"

"You forget that he, himself, is malaria-poisoned, as your uncle's letter said. Probably he's had just such chills as mine. Let's make haste to thank him."

After a hurried breakfast, husband and wife went together to the store, and found Caleb awaiting them at the back door. He had already seen Grace's figure at the window of the sitting room.

"Je — ru — salem!" he exclaimed, looking intently at Grace. "I never saw a worse shake than yourn, which is sayin' a mighty lot, considerin' I was born an' raised in the West. But you look just as good as new. Well, there's somethin' good in ev'rythin', if you look far enough for it — even in an ager-chill."

"Good in a chill, indeed!" Philip exclaimed.

"Yes; its good p'int is that it don't last long. Havin' a chill's like bein' converted; if somethin' didn't shut down on the excitement pretty quick, there'd be nothin' left o' the subject. Well, seein' you're here, I reckon I'd better take a look in the pork-house."

"He has sprinkled the floor with Florida water!" said Grace, as she entered the store. "Evidently he didn't doubt that I'd be well this morning, and he remembers yesterday."

Within an hour Doctor Taggess and his wife bustled into the store, and Mrs. Taggess hurried to Grace, and said: —

"I'd have come to you yesterday, my dear, if I hadn't known I could be of no use. Chills are like cyclones; they'll have their own way while they last, and everything put in their way makes them more troublesome."

The Doctor consulted Philip, apart, as to what had been done, approved of Caleb's treatment, and gave additional directions; then he turned upon Grace his kind eyes and pleasant smile, which Caleb had rightly intimated were his best medicines, and he said:—

"Well, has Doctor Caleb found time to give you his favorite theory, which is that a chill or any other malarial product is a means of grace?"

"Caleb values his life too highly to advance such a theory at present," Philip answered for his wife.

"Just so, just so. Well, there's a time for everything, but Caleb isn't entirely wrong on that subject. There are other and less painful and entirely sufficient means of grace, however, from which one can choose, so chills aren't necessary — for that particular purpose, and I hope you won't have any more of them. I'm

afraid you forgot some of the advice I gave you, the first time we met, about how to take care of yourself until you had become acclimated."

Philip and Grace looked at each other sheepishly, and admitted that they had not forgotten, but neglected. They had felt so well, so strong, they said.

"Just so, just so. Malaria's just like Satan, in many ways, but especially in sometimes appearing as an angel of light. At first it will stimulate every physical faculty of a healthy person like good wine, but suddenly — well, you know. I had my suspicions the last time I noticed your splendid complexion, but between mending broken limbs and broken heads, and old people leaving the world, and young people coming into it, I'm too busy to do all the work I lay out for myself. You may have one more chill —"

"Oh, Doctor!"

"'Twon't be so bad as the first one, unless it comes to-day. They have four different and regular periods — every day, every other day, once in three days, and once in seven days,

and each is worse than all of the others combined — according to the person who has it. I'll soon cure yours, whichever kind it may be, and after that I'm going to get Mrs. Taggess to keep you in mind of the necessary precautions against new attacks, for I've special use for you in this town and county. I wonder if Caleb has told you that you, too, are a means of grace? No? Well, he's a modest chap, but he'll get to it yet, and I'll back him up. This county has needed a visible standard of physical health for young women to live up to, and you entirely fill the bill."

"I shouldn't wonder, Doctor," said Philip, while Grace blushed, "that, religious though you are, you sometimes agree with the sceptic who said that if he'd been the Creator of the world he'd have made health catching, instead of disease."

"No, I can't say that I do. Heaven knows I'm sick enough of sickness; no honest physician's bills pay him for the miseries he has to see, and think of, and fight; but health's very much like money — it's valued most by those who have to work hardest to get it: those who

come by it easily are likely to squander it. I can't quite make out, by the ordinary signs, how your wife came by her own. I wonder if she'd object to telling me. I don't ask from mere curiosity, I assure you."

"I'm afraid 'twill stimulate my self-esteem to tell," Grace replied, with heightening color, "for I'm prouder of my health than of anything else — except my husband. I got it by sheer hard, long effort, through the necessity for six years, of going six days in the week, sick or well, rain or shine, to and from a store, and of standing up, for nine or ten hours a day while I was inside. To lose a day or two in such a store generally meant to lose one's place, so a girl couldn't afford to be sick, or even feeble."

"Aha! Wife, did you hear that? Now, Mrs. Somerton, Claybanks and vicinity need you even more than I'd supposed. But — do try to have patience with me, for I'm a physician, you know, and what you tell me may be of great service to other young women; I won't use your name, if you object. Did you have good health from the first?"

"No, indeed! I was a thin, pale, little country girl when I went to the city; I'd worked so hard at school for years that all my vitality seemed to have gone to my head. Work in the store was cruelly hard, — indeed, it never became easy, — and I had headaches, backaches, dizzy times — oh, all sorts of aches and wearinesses. But in a great crowd of women there are always some with sharp eyes, and clear heads, and warm hearts, and sometimes the mother-feeling besides. I wasn't the only chronically tired girl in the place; most of the others looked and felt as I did. Well, some of the good women I've mentioned were perpetually warning us girls to be careful of our health, and telling us how to do it."

"Good! Good! What did they say — in general?"

"Nothing," said Grace, laughing, and then remaining silent a moment, as she seemed to be looking backward. "For each said something in particular. All had hobbies. One thought diet was everything; with another it was the daily bath; others harped on long and regular sleep, or avoidance of excitement, or

fresh air while sleeping, or clothes and the healthiest way to wear them, or exercise, or the proper position in which to stand, or on carrying the head and shoulders high, or deep breathing, or recreation, or religion, or avoidance of the tea, cake, and candy habit."

"Well, well! Now tell me, please, which of these hobbies you adopted."

"All of them — every one of them," Grace replied, with an emphatic toss of her head. "First I tried one, with some benefit, then another, and two or three more, and finally the entire collection."

"Hurrah!" shouted the Doctor. "You can be worth more to the women hereabouts than a dozen doctors like me, if you will — and of course you will. Indeed, you must. One more question, — positively the last. You couldn't have been the only woman who profited by the advice you received?"

"Oh, no. In any of the stores in which I worked there were some strong, wholesome, grand women who had literally fought their way up to what they were, for small pay and long hours, and weariness at night, and many

other things combined to make any special effort of self-denial very, very hard — too hard for some of the girls, I verily believe. I don't think I'm narrow or easily satisfied; sometimes I've been fastidious and slow in forming acquaintances, but among all the other women I've seen, or heard of, or read about, there aren't any for whom I'd exchange some of my sister — shopgirls."

"Saleswomen, if you please," said Philip.

"Well, well!" drawled the Doctor, who had been looking fixedly at Grace. "I don't wonder that you're what you are. Come along, wife."

As Doctor and Mrs. Taggess departed, Grace said to her husband: —

"That is the highest compliment that I ever had." And Philip replied: —

"I hope 'tis good for chills."

X — SHE WANTED TO KNOW

GRACE'S malarial attack was soon repulsed, but the memory of that Sunday chill remained vivid. So Grace followed the Doctor's instructions as carefully as if she were an invalid on the brink of the grave, and she compelled Philip also to heed the counsel of precaution which Doctor Taggess had given to both. From that time forward she took personal sympathetic interest in all malarial victims of whom she heard, especially in those who purchased from the great stock of proprietary medicines in Somerton's store. Not infrequently a farmer or villager would be seized by a chill while talking or transacting business in the store, and Grace, despite her own experience in a warm room and under many woollen coverings, could scarcely help begging him to accept the loan of heavy shawls from the store's stock, and to

sit undisturbed by the fire in the back room. When she planned a Sunday dinner, at which Doctor Taggess and his wife were to be guests, it was partly for the purpose of questioning the Doctor about the origin of malaria, and of its peculiarities, which seemed almost as numerous as cases; but Philip assured her that busy doctors, like other men of affairs, hated nothing so much as to "talk shop" out of business hours.

Fortunately she gradually became too busy to have time in which to become a monomaniac on malaria. The specimen organ arrived, and was placed in the church, to the great edification of the people. Grace was for a time the only performer, but to prepare relief for herself, improve the quality of the congregational singing, and not without an eye to business, she organized an evening music class, and quickly trained several young women to play some of the simpler hymn-tunes, — and also to purchase organs on the instalment plan.

From music lessons to dress-making is a far cry, but the fame of the purple and "Scare-

Cow" dress had pervaded the county, and all the girls wanted dresses like it, which was somewhat embarrassing after the stock of the two calicoes had been exhausted. Then there arose a demand for something equally lovely, pretty, nice, sweet, or scrumptious, according to the vocabulary of the demander, and Eastern jobbers of calicoes and other prints and cheap dress-goods were one day astonished to receive from "Philip Somerton, late Jethro Somerton," a request for a full line of samples — the first request of the sort from that portion of the state. To be able to ask in a store, "How would you make this up?" and to get a satisfying answer, was a privilege which not even the most hopeful women of Claybanks had ever dared to expect, so the "truck trade" of the town and county — the business that came of women carrying eggs, butter, chickens, feathers, etc., to the stores to barter for goods — drifted almost entirely to Somerton's store, and caused John Henry Bustpodder, a matter-of-fact German merchant on the next block, to say publicly that if his wife should die he would shut up the store

and leave it shut till he could get to New York and marry a shopgirl.

By midspring Grace had quite as few idle moments as her husband or Caleb; for between housekeeping, music-teaching, talking with commercial travellers, and selling goods, she seldom found time to enjoy the horse and buggy that Philip had bought for her, and she often told her husband, in mock complaint, that she worked longer hours than she had ever done in New York, and that she really must have an advance of pay if he did not wish her to transfer her abilities and customers to some rival establishment. Yet she enjoyed the work; she had a keen sense of humor, which sharpened the same sense in others, and when women were at the counter, she frequently found excuse to start a chorus of laughter. To her husband, a customer was merely a customer; to Grace he was frequently a character, and she had seen so few characters in the course of her New York experiences that she rejoiced in the change. She was sympathetic, too, so the younger women talked to her of much besides

"truck" and goods. When one day a country matron rallied her on being without children, another matron exclaimed, "She's second mother to half the gals in the county" — a statement which Grace repeated to Philip in great glee, following it with a demure question as to the advisability of living up to her new dignity by taking to spectacles and sunbonnets.

But in her sober moments, and sometimes in the hurry of business, a spectre of malaria would suddenly intrude upon her thoughts. Occasionally she saw cases of rheumatism, rickets, helpless limbs, twitching faces, and other ailments that caused her heart to ache, and prompted her to ask the cause. The answers were various: "malary" — "fever an' ager" — "malarier" — "chills" — "malaria," but the meanings were one. One day she burst in an instant from laughter into tears at seeing a babe, not a year old, shaking violently with a chill. Straightway Grace went to the minister — poor minister! — and demanded to know how the Lord could permit so dreadful an occurrence. One day, after engaging Doctor

Taggess in general conversation, she abruptly said, despite Philip's reminder that physicians dislike "shop talk": —

"I wish you would tell me all about malaria; what it is, and where it comes from, and why we don't get rid of it."

"My dear woman," the Doctor replied, "ask me about electricity, of which no one knows much, and I can tell you something, but malaria is beyond my ken. I know it when I see it in human nature; that is, I treat almost all diseases as if they were malarial, and I seldom find myself mistaken, but, beyond that, malaria is beyond my comprehension."

"But, Doctor, it must be something, and come from somewhere."

"Oh, yes. 'Tis generally admitted that malaria is due to an invisible emanation from the soil, and is probably a product of vegetation in a certain stage of decay. It seems to be latent in soil that has not been exposed to the air for some time, — such as that thrown from cellars and wells in process of excavation, — and all swamps are believed to be malaria breeders; for when the swamp land of a

section is drained, the malarial diseases of the vicinity disappear."

"Then why aren't all swamps drained?"

"Because the work would be too expensive, in the sections where the swamps are, I suppose. Look at this township, for example: while all the ground is open, — that is, not frozen, — the farmers and other people have all they can do at planting, cultivating, harvesting, etc. Swamp land makes the richest soil, after it has been drained, but who's going to drain his own swamp when he already has more good land than he can cultivate? Some of the farmers work at it, a little at a time, but it is slow work, — discouragingly slow, — besides being frightfully hard and disgustingly dirty."

"Then why doesn't the government do it?"

"I thought you'd come to that, for every woman's a socialist at heart until she learns better. Still, so is every man. Well, governments have no money of their own; all they have is taken from the people, in the form of taxes, and any increase of taxes, especially for jobs as large as swamp drainage in this state, would be too unpopular to be voted. Besides,

while it would be of general benefit to the many, it would specially and greatly benefit the owners of the swamp land, which would start a frightful howl. Private enterprise may be depended upon to banish swamps and malaria; but first there must be enough population, and enough increase in the value of land, to justify it. I wish 'twould do so in this county and in my day. 'Twould lessen my income, but 'twould greatly increase my happiness, for doctors have hearts. By the way, have you yet heard from Caleb on malaria as a means of grace? There's a chance to learn something about malaria — to hear something about it, at least; for Caleb talks well on his pet subjects. Poor fellow, I wish I could cure his chronic malarial troubles. I've tried everything, and he does enjoy far better health than of old, but the cause of the trouble remains. That man came of tall, broad-shouldered stock on both sides — you wouldn't imagine it, would you, to look at him? He's always been industrious and intelligent; everybody likes him and respects him; but at times it's almost impossible to extract an idea or

even a word from him — all on account of malaria. Again, he'll have the clearest, cleverest head in town. Seems strange, doesn't it?"

Grace improved an early opportunity to say to Caleb that perhaps she had done wrong in recovering so quickly from her attack of chills, for she had been told that he regarded malaria as a means of grace.

"Well, yes, I do — 'bout the same way as some other things — air, an' light, an' food, an' money, for instance. Anythin' that helps folks to make the most of their opportunities can be a means of grace; when it isn't, the folks themselves are the trouble. Reckon nobody'll dispute that about good things. But when it comes to things that ain't popular, — like floods, an' light'nin'-strokes, an' malary, — well, folks don't seem to see it in the same light, and they suspect the malary most, 'cause it's far an' away the commonest. I've been laughed at so often for my notions on the subject that I've got hardened to it, an' don't mind standin' it again."

"Oh, Caleb! Please don't say that! You

don't believe I would laugh at anything you're earnest about, do you?"

"Well, I don't really b'lieve you would, an' I'm much 'bliged to you for it. You see, my idee is this. You remember what's said, in one of the psalms, about they that go down to the sea in ships, and what happens to them when a big wind comes up — how they are at their wit's end, because they're in trouble too big for them to manage, so they have to call unto the Lord? — somethin' that sailors ain't b'lieved to be given to doin' over an' above much, judgin' by their general conversation as set down in books an' newspapers. Well, malary's like the wind, an' the spirit that's compared with it; you can't tell where it's comin' from, or when, or how long it's goin' to stay, or what it'll do before it goes. It puts a man face to face with his Maker, an' just when the man can't put on airs, no matter how hard he tries. I think anythin' that kicks a man into seein' his dependence on heaven is a means of grace, even if the man's too mean to take advantage of it. When a man's shakin' with a chill that's come

at him on the sly, as a chill always does, an' finds all his grit an' all the doctor's medicine can't keep him from shakin' — snatches him clean away from his own grip, which is the awfullest feelin' a man can have — "

"You're entirely right about it, Caleb," said Grace, with a shudder.

"Thank you, but 'taint only the shake. It's not knowin' how the thing is goin' to come out, or how helpless it's goin' to make one, or in what way it's goin' to upset all his plans an' calculations — why, it teaches absolute dependence on a higher power, an' 'tisn't only folks that make most fuss 'bout it in church that feels it. After one gets that feelin', he's lots more of a man than he ever was before. 'I think malary has been the makin' of human nature out West here, an' in some parts of the East too. Why, do you know that almost every one of our greatest Presidents was born or brought up in malary-soaked country? Washington was, I know; for I had chills all over his part of Virginia, in war time, an' more'n a hundred thousand other men kept me comp'ny at it. Jackson,

Lincoln, Grant, was some of the other Presidents that knowed malary better than they afterwards knowed their own Cabinets. As to smaller men, but mighty big, nevertheless — all the big cities of the land's full of 'em. Look up the record of a city's great business man, an' I'm told you'll find he never was born an' raised there, but in the back country somewhere, generally out West, an' nine times in ten can tell you more 'bout his ager spells than you care to hear. Still, such cases don't bear on the subject o' means o' grace, though they come from the same causes. Out in these parts malary does more'n ministers to fill the churches. So long as men feel first-rate, they let the church alone mighty hard, but just let 'em get into a hard tussle with malary an' they begin to come to meetin'. The worse it treats 'em, the more they come, which is just what they need. That's the way the church got me; though that ain't particularly to the p'int, for one swaller don't make a summer. But I've been watchin' the signs for twenty year, an' I'm not gettin' off guess-work when I say that malary's been

one of the leadin' means o' grace in this great Western country, an' of pretty much ev'rythin' else that's worth havin'; the states that have most of it produce more good people to the thousan' than any other states, besides more great men, an' great ideas, an' first-class American grit. Now you can laugh if you feel the least bit like it."

"I don't, Caleb. But do answer me one question. If malaria has done so much good, and is doing it, do you think it ought to be preserved, — say as an American institution?"

"Well," said Caleb, "ev'rythin' an' ev'rybody, from Moses an' manna to Edison an' electricity, has had a mission, an' when the work was done, the mission took a rest an' gave somethin' else the right o' way. When malary's accomplished its mission, I, for one, would like to assist in layin' it away. I think I'm entitled to a share in the job, for malary an' me has been powerful close acquaintances for a mighty long time."

XI—CALEB'S NEWEST PROJECT

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"*ALONG* about now," said Caleb to Philip and Grace one morning in midspring, "is the easiest time o' year that a merchant ever gets in these parts; for, between the earliest ploughin' for spring wheat to the latest ploughin' for corn, the farmers that 'mount to anythin' are too busy to come to town when the weather's good; when the rain gives 'em a day off from work, they've got sense enough to take a rest as well as to give one to the hosses. I thought I'd mention the matter, in case you'd had anythin' on your mind to be done, an' hadn't found time to do it."

"H'm!" said Philip, rubbing his forehead, as if to extract some special mental memoranda.

"Thank you, Caleb, for the suggestion," Grace said, "but I believe every foot of our garden ground is fully planted."

"Yes, so I've noticed. 'Twill be a big advertisement, too, if the things turn out as good as the pictur's an' readin' matter in the plant catalogues you got; for there ain't many things in them boxes of plants you bought that was ever seen or heerd of in these parts. How'd you come to know so much about such things?"

"Oh, I kept window-gardens in the city all summer, and indoor gardens in winter."

"I want to know! What give you that idee?"

"The beauty of flowers, I suppose — and their cheapness," Grace replied. "Besides, flowers in the winter were a good test of the air in our rooms, for air that kills plants is not likely to be good enough for human beings."

"Je — ru — salem! I must tell that to Doc Taggess, so that word about it can get to some of our country folks. Some of them keep their houses so tight shut in winter that the folks come out powerful peaked in the spring, just when they need all the stren'th they can get. But ain't you got nothin' else on your mind to do, besides exercisin' your hoss once in a while?"

As he asked the question his eyes strayed from Grace to Philip, and an amused expression came over the little man's face, so that Grace asked: —

"What is so funny in Philip's appearance?"

"Nothin'," said Caleb, quickly pretending to arrange the goods on a shelf.

"Don't say 'Nothing' in that tantalizing way, when your every feature is saying that there is something."

"Out with it, Caleb," said Philip. "I promise that I shan't feel offended."

"Well, the fact is, I was thinkin' o' somethin' I overheard you tell your uncle, first time you came here. He asked you what you was goin' to the city for. 'To continue my studies,' says you. 'What studies?' says he. 'Literature an' art,' says you. Then Jethro come pretty nigh to bustin' hisself. After you was gone he borried some cyclopeedy volumes from Doc Taggess, an' in odd moments he opened 'em at long pieces that was headed 'Literature' an' 'Art.' I watched him pretty close, to know when he was through, so I could pump him about 'em, for his sake as well as mine; for I've most

generally found that a man ain't sure of what he knows till he has to tell it to somebody else. But Jethro would most generally drop asleep 'long about the second or third page, an' one day he slapped one of the books shut an' hollered, 'Dog-goned nonsense!' Like enough he was wrong about it, though, for afterwards I dipped into the same pieces myself, a little bit at a time, and 'peared to me there was a mighty lot of pleasant things in the subjects, if one could spend his whole life huntin' for 'em."

"You're quite right as to the general fact," said Philip, "and also as to the time that may be given to it."

"Am, eh? Glad I sized it up so straight. Well, then, I reckon you didn't finish the job in the city, an' that you're still peggin' away at it."

Philip looked at Grace, and both laughed as he replied: —

"I don't believe I've opened any book but the Bible in the past month."

"I want to know! Then the hundreds of books in your house are about like money that's

locked up in the safe instead o' bein' out at interest, or turnin' itself over in some other way, ain't they?"

"Quite so."

Caleb went into a brown study, and Philip and Grace chatted apart, and laughed — occasionally sighed — over what they had intended to buy and read, when they found themselves well off. Suddenly Caleb emerged from his brown study and said: —

"Ain't them books like a lot of clothes or food that's locked up, doin' no good to their owner, while other folks, round about, are hungry, or shiverin'?"

"Caleb," said Philip, after a long frown in which his wife did not join, although distinctly invited, "my practised eye discerns that you think our books, which are about as precious to us as so many children might be, ought to be lent out, to whoever would read them."

"Well, why not? Ev'rybody else in these parts that's got books lends 'em. Doc Taggess does it, the minister does it, an' a lot of others. The trouble is that a good many families has got the same books. Once in a while

some book agent with head-piece enough to take his pay in truck has gone through this county like a cyclone — an' left about as much trash behind him as a cyclone usually does."

"Aha! And yet you'd have me believe that the people who have bought such trash would enjoy the books which my wife and I have been selecting with great care for years?"

"Can't tell till you give 'em the chance, as the darkey said when he was asked how many watermelons his family could tuck away. I don't s'pose you knowed there was the makin' of a first-class country merchant in you, did you, till you got the chance to try? Besides, as I reckon I've said before, you mustn't judge our people by their clothes. I don't b'lieve they average more fools to the thousan' than city folks."

"Neither do I, Caleb; but tastes differ, even among the wisest, and to risk my darling books among a lot of people who might think me a fool for my pains — oh, 'tis not to be thought of. Next, I suppose, you'll suggest that I take my pictures from the walls and lend them around, say a week to a family."

"No; I wouldn't be so mean as that. Besides, pictures, an' bang-up ones, are plentifuller than books in these parts, for people that like that sort o' thing."

"Indeed? I wouldn't have thought it. Well, 'Live and learn.' Do tell me what kind of pictures you refer to, and who has them?"

Caleb looked embarrassed for a moment; then he assumed an air of bravado, and replied: —

"Well, I haven't missed a sunrise or sunset in nigh onto twenty year, unless I was too busy or too sick to see 'em. An' I've put lots o' other folks up to lookin' at 'em, an' you'd be astonished to know how many has stuck to it."

"Bravo, Caleb! Bravo!" Grace exclaimed.

"Much obliged; reckon you enjoy 'em, too. As Doc Taggess says, when you look at that kind o' pictur', you don't have to hold in until you can hunt up a book an' find out if the painter was first-class. But there's plenty more pictur's in the sky an' lots o' other places out doors, for folks that like 'em. To be sure, you can't always find 'em, as if they

was in frames on a wall, but they show up often enough to keep 'emselves in mind. But books — well, books are different."

"Caleb, I weaken. I'm willing to compromise. I promise you that I will set apart a certain number of my books — volumes that ought to be of general interest — to be loaned to customers!"

"Good! I knowed you'd see your duty if 'twas dumped right before your face. But what's the matter with doin' somethin' more? I've had a project for a long time, that —"

Caleb suddenly ceased speaking and looked hurt, for he detected a peculiar interchange of glances between Philip and Grace.

"Go on," said Philip.

"Never mind," Caleb replied.

"Please go on, Caleb," Grace begged.

"I may be a fool," said Caleb, "but it does gall me to be laughed at ahead of time."

"Really, Caleb, we weren't laughing at you. Both of us chanced to think, at the same time, of something — something that we had read. Some husbands and wives have a way of both getting the same thought at an

unforeseen instant. Do go on; haven't we proved to you that we think your projects good?"

"Sorry I made a baby of myself," apologized Caleb. "Well, I've read in newspapers that books never was so cheap as they are now, an' from some of the offers that come to us by letter I should say 'twas so. I know more'n a little about the names o' books an' o' their writers, an' some of the prices o' good ones look as if the printers stole their paper an' didn't pay their help. Now, we don't make much use o' the back room o' the store. S'pose you fetch in there your cyclopeedy, an' dictionary, an' big atlas, to be looked at by anybody that likes. Then buy, in the city, a couple of hundred books, — say a hundred dollars' worth, — not too wise, an' not too silly, an' let it be knowed that at Somerton's store there's a free circulating library."

"For Somerton's customers only," added Philip.

"No, for ev'rybody — not only for the sake o' the principle, but to draw trade. The first man that does that thing in this town won't

ever be forgot by folks whose hearts are in the right place — not unless I'm all wrong on human nature."

"Which is as unlikely as the wildest thing ever dreamed," said Philip. "I don't doubt that you're entirely right about the advertising value of your project. My atlas, dictionary, and cyclopedia will serve me quite as well in the back room as if in the house, and the cost of the other books will be repaid by the first new farmer-customer we catch by means of the library."

"Then the thing is to be a go?"

"Certainly it is."

"When?"

"Now — at once — as soon as my books can be brought from the house and the others bought in the city."

"And I," Grace added, "am to be a librarian, and to select the new books. I remember well the names of all the most popular books in the public library of the little town I was born in, and all the best — never mind the worst — that my fellow-shopgirls used to read, and I know the second-hand bookshops in New York,

where many good books may be had at a quarter of their original price; so if a hundred dollars is to be spent, I'll engage to get three or four hundred volumes, instead of two hundred. Meanwhile, don't either of you men breathe a word of Caleb's project, until the books are here; otherwise some other merchant may get ahead of us."

"That's sound business sense," said Caleb, "but I wish you hadn't — I mean I wish one of us had said it instead of you."

"Oh, Caleb! Do you think that my interest in the business of the store is making me sordid — mercenary — grasping?"

"Well, I never saw any signs of it before, but —"

"Nor have you seen them to-day. You'll have to take to eye-glasses, Caleb, if only in justice to me. The only reason I don't wish any one else to start the library is that I think the laborer is worthy of his hire. You were the laborer — that is, you devised the plan, — and I wouldn't for anything have you deprived of your pay, which will consist of your pleasure at seeing your old acquaintances supplied with

good reading matter. Honor to whom honor is due. Now do you understand?"

Caleb's small gray face grew rosy, albeit a bit sheepish, and to hide it, he tiptoed over to Philip, who was staring into vacancy, apparently in search of something, and said:—

"As I b'lieve I've said before, ain't she a peeler?"

"Yes; oh, yes," Philip answered mechanically.

"You don't seem so sure of it as you might be," complained Caleb. "Have you struck a stump?"

"No; oh, no."

"What is the matter, Mr. Owl?" asked Grace, moving toward the couple.

"I'm puzzled — that's all, yet 'tis not a little," Philip replied. "I don't think I'm a fool about business. Even Caleb here, who is too true a friend to flatter, says I've done remarkably well, and increased the number of our customers and the profits of the business, yet 'tis never I who devise the new, clever plans by which the increase comes. This matter of the free circulating library is only one of several

cases in point; they began months ago, with the use of our piano in church. I don't believe I'd have done them solely with a view to business, but I couldn't have helped seeing that they would have that effect in the end, so I wonder why I, myself, shouldn't have thought of them. Perhaps you can tell me, Caleb; don't be afraid of hurting my feelings, and don't be over-modest about yourself; 'tis all between friends, you know."

Caleb leaned on the counter, from which he brushed some imaginary dust; then he contemplated the brushed spot as if he were trying to look through the counter, as he replied: —

"Mebbe it's because we have different startin'-places. In a book of sermons I've got up in my room — though 'tain't by one o' our Methodists — there's a passage that tells how astronomers find certain kinds o' stars. It 'pears that they don't p'int their telescopes here, there, an' ev'rywhere, lookin' for the star an' nothin' else, but they turn the big concern on a rather dark bit o' sky, somewhere near where the star ought to be, an'

they work it 'round, little by little, lookin' at ev'rythin' they can see, until they've took in the whole neighborhood, so to speak, an' what stars of ev'ry kind is around, an' what all of 'em is doin', an' so workin' in'ard, little by little, they stumble on what they was really lookin' for. Well, that's 'bout my way in business. First, I think about the neighborhood, the people, an' what they're doin', an' what ought to be done for 'em, an' all of a sudden they're all p'intin' right at the business, like the little stars for the big one, and couldn't keep from doin' it if they tried their level best. Now, p'raps you don't work that way, but try the other, 'cause — well, p'raps 'cause it's the quickest. P'raps I ought to say that mebbe my way ain't the best, but — "

"Don't say it," interrupted Philip, "because I shan't believe it, nor shall I believe that you yourself thought there was any possibility of its not being the better way of the two."

XII — DEFERRED HOPES

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THE library arrived, and the books were covered, labelled, numbered, and shelved before the probable beneficiaries knew of their existence; then Master Scrapsey Green was employed to walk through the village streets, ringing a bell, and shouting: —

"Free — circulating — library — now — open — at — Somerton's — store!"

Notices to the same effect had already been mailed to all possible readers in the county. The self-appointed librarian had not believed that more than one in four of the inhabitants of the town or county would care to read, but neither had she taken thought of the consuming curiosity of villagers and country-folk. Within an hour the back room of the store was packed to suffocation, although Grace pressed a book on each visitor, with a request to make way for some one else.

After several hours of issuing and recording, Grace found herself alone; so she gladly escaped to the store proper to compare notes with Philip and Caleb, who had taken turns at dropping in to "see the fun," as Philip called it, and to announce, at the librarian's request, that only a single book a week would be loaned to a family, and to request the borrowers to return the books as soon as read.

On entering the store, Grace found herself face to face with Doctor and Mrs. Taggess and Pastor Grateway, all of whom greeted her cordially, and congratulated her on the successful opening of the Somerton Library.

"That's a cruel proof of the saying that one sows and another reaps," she replied; "but please understand in future that this is not the Somerton Library. It is the Caleb Wright Library."

"Je — ru — salem!" exclaimed Caleb, "an' I didn't put a cent into it!"

"You devised it," Grace replied. "'Twas like Columbus making the egg stand on end; any one could do it after being told how."

About this time some responses, in the

forms of half-grown boys and girls on foot, began to arrive from the farming district, and Grace had occasionally to leave the store. As she returned from one of these excursions, Mrs. Taggess took her hands and exclaimed: —

"What a good time you must have had!"

"Oh, wife!" protested the Doctor. "Is this the place for sarcasm? The poor girl looks tired to death."

"Nevertheless, Mrs. Taggess is entirely right," said Grace. "It was a good time, indeed. How I wish I could sketch from memory! Still, I shall never forget the expression of some of those faces. What a dear lot of people there are in this town!"

"Hurrah!" shouted the Doctor. "I was afraid that, coming from the city, you mightn't be able to find it out. I apologize with all my heart."

"'Tis high time you did," said his wife. "The idea that a doctor, of all men, shouldn't know that a woman's heart rules her eyes."

"Yes," said the Doctor, affecting a sigh. "It's dreadful to be a man, and know so much

that sometimes an important bit of knowledge gets hidden behind something else at the very time it's most needed. How many books have you remaining, to satisfy the country demand, Mrs. Somerton?"

"Not enough, I fear. We ought to have bought one or two hundred more volumes."

"Which means," said Philip, with a pretence at being grieved at having been forgotten during the congratulations, "that they will have to be purchased at once, and paid for, by the mere nobody of the concern."

"Nobody, indeed!" exclaimed Grace, with a look which caused the Taggesses to exchange delighted pinches, and the minister to say:—

"I don't think any one need go far to find a proof of the blessed mystery that one and one need make only one, if rightly added."

"No, indeed," said the Doctor, "but at least one-half of the one in question is so tired that it ought to get some rest, which it won't and can't while we visitors stay here to admire and ask questions. Come along, wife; we'll find some better time to talk her and these other good people to death about what they've done. I've

only to say that if Brother Grateway doesn't give you his benediction in words, he will leave one for you all the same, and there'll be two others to keep it company — eh, wife?"

"Phil," Grace said, as soon as the visitors had departed, "I've a new idea. 'Tis not as good as Caleb's which has made this library, but 'twill give no end of surprise and satisfaction to people, as well as lots of fun to me and bring some business to the store. I want a camera. I don't see how we were so stupid as not to bring one with us from New York."

"A camera?" said Caleb. "What sort of a thing is it?"

"A contrivance for taking photographs. There are small cheap ones that any amateur can use. Two or three girls in our store in New York had them, and took some very fair pictures."

"I want to know! Well, if any gals done it, I reckon you can."

"You shall see. I want one at once, Phil; order it by the first mail, please, and with all the necessary outfit."

"Your will is law, my dear, but I shall first

have to learn where to send the order and exactly what to get."

"Let me attend to it. I can order direct from the store in which I worked; they sold everything of the kind."

"There'll be no mail eastward till to-morrow. Won't you oblige your husband, at once, by going to the house, and making a picture of yourself, on a lounge, with your eyes shut?"

"Yes — if I must. But oh, what lots of fun I shall have with that camera!"

Caleb's eyes followed Grace to the door; then he said: —

"Been workin' about four hours, harder'n I ever see a Sunday-school librarian work, looked tired almost to death, an' yet full to the eyes with the fun she's goin' to have. Ah, that's what health can do for human nature. I wonder if you two ever know how to thank Heaven that you are as you are — both well-built an' healthy? 'Pears to me that if I was either of you, I'd be wicked enough, about a hundred times a day, to put up the Pharisee's prayer an' thank Heaven that I was not like other men."

"No man can be everything, Caleb," said Philip. "I don't doubt that there are thousands of men who'd gladly exchange their health for your abilities."

"Well, I s'pose it's human nature, an' p'r'aps divine purpose too, that folks should hanker most for what they haven't got; if it wa'n't so, ev'rybody'd be a stick-in-the-mud all his life, an' nobody'd amount to much; but I do tell you that for a man to spend most of his grown-up years in makin' of himself as useful a machine as he can, an' not especially with a view to Number One either, an' all the time bein' reminded that he hain't got enough steam in his b'iler to work the machine except by fits an' starts, an' there don't seem to be any way of gettin' up more steam except by gettin' a new b'iler, which ain't possible in the circumstances, why, it's powerful tough, an' that's a fact."

"We can't all run thousand-horse-power engines, Caleb," said Philip, hoping to console his friend. "If we could, I'm afraid a great lot of the world's necessary work would go undone. Watches, worked with what might be called half-mouse-power, are quite as necessary

and useful in their way as big clocks run by ton weights; and a sewing machine, worked by a woman's foot, can earn quite as much, over running expenses, as a plough with a big horse in front and a big man behind it."

"Like enough. But the trouble with me is that the machine I've been makin' o' myself is the kind that needs an awful lot o' power, an' the power ain't there an' can't be put there."

"There are plenty more machines with exactly the same defect, old chap," said Philip, with a sigh, "so you've no end of company in your trouble. I could tell you of a machine of my own that lacks the proper power—sufficient steam, as you've expressed it."

"I want to know! An' you the pictur' of health!"

"Oh, yes. Health is invaluable, so far as it goes, but 'tisn't everything. Going back to steam for the sake of illustration, you know it comes of several other things — water, a boiler, some fuel, and draught, each in proper proportion to all the others. I don't doubt there's a similar combination necessary to human force, and its application, and that I haven't the secret

of it, for I know I've failed at work I've most wanted to do, and succeeded best at what I liked least."

"Reckon you must have hated storekeepin' then, for you've made a powerful go of it."

"Thank you; I'm not ashamed to confess to you that 'tis the last business in the world that I'd have selected."

"Well, as to that, there's no difference of opinion between us, an' yet, here I've been storekeepin' — an' not for myself either — 'most twenty year."

"And doing it remarkably well, too. As to not doing it for yourself, you may change your position and have an interest in the business whenever you wish it. I'm astonished that my uncle didn't say the same to you."

"But he did — after his fashion. He meant fair, but I said 'No,' for I hadn't given up hopes of what I'd wanted to do, so I didn't want to give the store all my waking hours, as an owner ought to do most of the time."

"Indeed he ought. If it isn't an impertinent question, what had you selected as your life's work?"

"The last thing you'd suspect me of, I s'pose. Long ago — before the war — I set my heart on bein' a great preacher, an' on beginnin' by gettin' a first-class education. I don't need to tell you that I missed both of 'em about as far as a man could. I wasn't overconceited about 'em at the start, for about that time there was a powerful movement in our denomination for an educated ministry. We had a few giants in the pulpit, but for ev'ry one of 'em there was dozens of dwarfs that made laughin'-stocks of 'emselves an' the church. Well, I was picked out as a young man with enough head-piece to take in an education an' with the proper spirit an' feelin' to use it well after I'd got it. Just then the war broke out, an' I went to it; when I got back I had a crippled leg, an' a dull head, an' a heavy heart — afterwards I found 'twas the liver instead of the heart, but that didn't make me any the less stupid. The upshot was that I was kind o' dropped as a candidate for the ministry, an' that made me sicker yet, an' I vowed that I'd get there in the course o' time, if I could get back my health an' senses. Once in a while,

for many years, I had hopes; then again I'd get a knock-down — an extry hard lot o' chills an' fevers, or some other turn of malary that made my mind as blank an' flat as a new slate. I tried to educate myself, bein' rather old to go to school or college, an' I plodded through lots o' books, but I had to earn my livin' besides, an' — well, I reckon you can see about how much time a man workin' in a store has for thinkin' about what he's read."

"Oh, can't I!"

"An' you know, now, what losin' health an' not findin' it again has been to me."

"Indeed I do, and you've my most hearty sympathy. Perhaps good health would have seen you through; perhaps not. Your experience is very like mine, in some respects. I didn't start with the purpose of being a preacher, but I was going to become educated so well that whenever I had a message of any sort to give to the world, — for every man occasionally has one, you know, — I should be able to do it in a manner that would command attention. I was fortunate enough to get into a business position in which my duties were

almost mechanical, so at night my mind was fresh enough for reading and study. My wife's tastes were very like my own, so we read and studied together; but my message has never come, and here I am where the only writing I'll ever do will be in account books and business correspondence. As to my art studies —"

"They help you to arrange goods on the shelves in a way that attracts attention; there can't be any doubt about that," Caleb interrupted.

"Thank you, Caleb. That is absolutely the first and only commendation that my art education has ever earned for me, and I assure you that I shall remember and prize it forever."

"I'm not an art-sharp," said Caleb, "but I shouldn't wonder if I could show you lots more signs of what you've learned an' think haven't come to anythin'. Same way with literature; nobody in this town, but you an' your wife, could an' would have got up that circulatin' library, an' knowed the names o' three hundred good books for it. Other towns'll hear of it, an' men there'll take up the idea —"

"Which was yours — not ours."

"Never mind; ideas don't come to anythin' till they're froze into facts. Other merchants'll hear of the library an' write you for names o' books an' other p'ints, an' the thing'll go on an' on till it'll amount to more than most any book that was ever writ. Bein' set on makin' a hit in literature an' art an' fetchin' up at dressin' store-shelves an' settin' up a circulatin' library reminds me of Jake Brockleband's steam engine. You hain't met Jake, I reckon?"

"I don't recall the name."

"He's in the next county below us, near the mouth of the crick. He goes in these parts by the name of the Great American Traveller, for he's seen more countries than anybody else about here, an' it all came through a steam engine. It 'pears that years ago Jake, who was a Yankee with a knack at anythin' that was mechanical, was picked out by some New Yorkers to go down to Brazil to preserve pine-apples on a large scale for the American market: he was to have a big salary and some shares of the company's stock. Part of his outfit was a little steam engine an' b'iler an'

two copper kettles as big as the lard kettles in your pork-house. Well, he got to work, with the idee o' makin' his fortune in a year or two, an' pretty soon he started a schooner load o' canned pineapples up North; but most o' the cans got so het up on the way that they busted, an' when the company found how bizness was, why, 'twas the comp'ny's turn to get het up an' bust. Jake couldn't get his salary, so he 'tached the engine an' kettles, an' looked about for somethin' to do with 'em. He shipped 'em up to a city in Venezuela, where there was plenty of cocoanut oil and potash to be had cheap, and started out big at soap-makin', but pretty soon he found that the Venezuelans wouldn't buy soap at any price: they hadn't been educated up to the use of such stuff. But there wa'n't no give-up blood in Jake, so he packed the engine an' soap over to a big town in Colombia — next country to Venezuela, — an' started a swell laundry, I b'lieve he called it, — a place where they wash clothes at wholesale. He 'lowed that as Colombia was a very hot country, an' the people was said to be of old Spanish stock

an' quite up to date, there'd be a powerful lot o' stockin's an' underclothes to be washed. Soon after he'd hung out his shingle, though, he heerd that no Colombians wore underclothes, an' mighty few of 'em wore socks.

"Well, 'Never say die' was Jake's family brand, so he built a boat with paddle-wheels an' fitted the steam engine to it, an' started in the passenger steamboat business on a Colombian river; the big copper kettles he fixed, one on each side, with awnin's over 'em, to carry passengers' young ones, so they couldn't crawl about an' tumble overboard. He did a good business for a spell, but all of a sudden the revolution season come on an' a gang of the rebels seized his boat, an' the gov'ment troops fired on 'em an' sunk it.

"But Jake managed to save the engine an' kettles, an' thinkin' 'twas about time to go north for a change, he got his stuff up to New Orleans, where he got another little boat built to fit the engine, an' started up-stream in the tradin'-boat business. He got along an' along, an' then up the Missouri River; but when he got up near the mouth of our crick he ran on a

snag, close inshore, that ripped the bottom an' sides off o' the boat an' didn't leave nothin' that could float.

"That might have been a deadener, if Jake had been of the dyin' kind, but he wasn't; an' as he was wrecked alongside of a town an' a saw-mill, he kept his eye peeled for business, an' pretty soon he'd put up a slab shanty, an' got a little circular saw, for his engine to work, an' turned out the first sawed shingles ever seen in these parts, an' when folks saw that they didn't curl up like cut shingles, he got lots o' business an' is keepin' it right along.

"'Tain't makin' me a millionnaire,' he says, 'an' the sight o' pineapples would make me tired, but at last I've struck a job that me an' the engine fits to a T, an' an angel couldn't ask more'n that, if he was in my shoes.'"

"That story, Caleb," said Philip, "is quite appropriate to my case. But see here, old chap, didn't it ever occur to you to apply it to yourself?"

"Can't say that it did," Caleb replied. "What put that notion into your head?"

"Everybody and everything, my own eyes

included. You started to be a preacher — not merely for the sake of talking, but for the good that your talk would do. I hear from every one that for many years you've been everybody's friend, doing all sorts of kind, unselfish acts for the good of other people. Mr. Grateway says that your work does more good than his preaching, and Doctor Taggess says you cure as many sick people as he. It seems to me that your disappointments, like Jake Brockleband's, have resulted in your finding a place that fits you to a T."

"I want to know! Well, I'm glad to hear it — from you. Kind o' seems, then, as if you an' me was in the same boat, don't it?"

XIII — FARMERS' WAYS

AS the spring days lengthened there was forced upon Grace a suspicion, which soon ripened into a conviction, that the West was very hot. She had known hot days in the East; for is there in the desert of Sahara any air hotter than that which overlies the treeless, paved streets, walled in by high structures of brick, stone, and iron, of the city of New York? But in New York the wind, on no matter how hot a day, is cool and refreshing; at Claybanks and vicinity the wind was sometimes like the back-draught of a furnace, and almost as wilting. To keep the wind out of the house — not to give it every opportunity to enter, as had been the summer custom in the East — became Grace's earnest endeavor, but with little success. At times it seemed to her that the heat was destroying her vitality; her husband, too,

feared for her health and insisted that she should go East to spend the summer; but Grace insisted that she would rather shrivel and melt than go away from her husband, so Philip appealed to Doctor Taggess, who said: —

"Quite womanly, and wifely, and also sensible, physiologically, for no one can become climate-proof out here if he dodges any single season. If your wife will follow my directions for a few months, she will be able to endure next season's heat well enough to laugh at it. Indeed, it might help her through the coming summer to make excuses to laugh at it: she's lucky enough to know how to laugh at slight provocation."

But the dust! Grace could remember days when New York was dusty, and any one who has encountered a cloud of city dust knows that it is of a quality compared with which the dust of country roads is the sublimation of purity. Nevertheless, the dust at Claybanks had some eccentric methods of motion. For it to rise in a heavy, sullen cloud whenever a wagon passed through a street was bad enough, especially if the wind

were in the direction of the house. Almost daily, however, and many times a day, it was picked up by little whirlwinds that came from no one knew where, and an inverted cone of dust, less than a foot in diameter at the base, but rapidly increasing in width to the height of fifty or more feet, would dash rapidly along a street, or across one, picking up all sorts of small objects in its way — leaves, bits of paper, sometimes even bark and chips. At first Grace thought these whirlwinds quite picturesque, but when one of them dashed across her garden, and broke against the side of the house, and deposited much of itself through the open windows, the lover of the picturesque suddenly began to extemporize window-nettings.

With the heat and the dust came a plague of insects and one of reptiles. One day the white sugar on the table seemed strangely iridescent with amber, which on investigation resolved itself into myriads of tiny reddish yellow ants. Caleb, who was appealed to, placed a cup of water under each table leg, which abated the plague, but the cups did not "compose" with the table and the rug.

Bugs of many kinds visited the house, by way of the windows and doors, until excluded by screens. At times the garden seemed fuller of toads than of plants, and not long afterward Grace was frightened almost daily by snakes. That the reptiles scurried away rapidly, apparently as frightened as she, did not lessen her fear of them. She expressed her feelings to Doctor Taggess, who said: —

"Don't let them worry you. They're really wonderfully retiring by disposition. This country is alive with them, but in my thirty years of experience I've never been called to a case of snake-bite."

"But, Doctor, isn't there any means of avoiding the torment of — snakes, toads, bugs, and ants?"

"Only one, that I know of — 'tis philosophy. Try to think of them as illustrations of the marvellous fecundity of the great and glorious West."

"How consoling!"

"I don't wonder you're sarcastic about it. Still, they'll disappear in the course of time, as they have from the older states."

"But when?"

"Oh, when the country becomes thoroughly subdued and tilled."

"Again I must say, 'How consoling!'"

Besides the wind, and dust, and insects, and reptiles, there was the sun, for Jethro Somerton had never planted a tree near his house. Tree-roots had a way of weakening foundations, he said; besides, trees would grow tall in the course of time, and perhaps attract the lightning. Still more, trees shaded roofs, so the spring and autumn rains remained in the shingles to cause dampness and decay, instead of drying out quickly.

But her own house seemed cool by comparison with some which she entered in the village and in the farming districts: houses such as most new settlers in the West have put up with their own hands and as quickly as possible; houses innocent of lath and plaster, and with only inch-thick wooden walls, upon which the sun beat so fiercely that by midday the inner surface of the wall almost blistered the hand that touched it. Not to have been obliged to enter such houses would have spared Grace

much discomfort, but it was the hospitable custom of the country to hail passers-by, in the season of open doors and windows, and Grace, besides being bound by the penalties peculiar to general favorites everywhere, was alive to the fear of being thought "stuck up" by any one.

Quickly she uprooted many delicate, graceful vines which she had planted to train against the sides of her own house, and replaced them with seeds of more rampant varieties. For days she made a single room of the house fairly endurable by keeping in it a large block of ice, brought from the ice-house by Philip in mid-morning; but the season's stock of the ice-house had not been estimated with a view to such drafts, so for the sake of the "truck" in cold storage she felt obliged to discontinue the practice. Wet linen sheets hung near the windows and open doors afforded some relief; but when other sufferers heard of them and learned their cost, and ejaculated "Goodness me!" or something of similar meaning, Grace was compelled to feel aristocratic and uncomfortable. She ex-

pressed to Caleb and to Doctor Taggess her pity for sufferers by the heat, and asked whether nothing could be done in alleviation.

"My dear woman, they don't suffer as much as you imagine," the Doctor replied. "In the first place, they are accustomed to the climate, as you are not; most of them were born in it. Another cooling fact is that neither men nor women wear as much clothing in hot weather as you Eastern people. They, or most of them, are always hard at work, and therefore always perspiring, which is nature's method of keeping people fairly comfortable in hot weather. I don't doubt that I suffer far more as I drive about the county, doing no harder work than holding the reins, than any farmer whom I see ploughing in the fields."

"I'm very glad to hear it, for their sakes, though not for your own. But how about the sick, and the poor little babies?"

"Ah, this is a sad country for sick folks, and for weaklings of any kind. Stifle in winter — roast in summer; that is about the usual way. Imagine, if you can, how an hon-

est physician feels when he's called to cases of sickness in some houses that you've seen."

"Caleb," Grace said, "was it as hot in the South, during the war, as it is out here?"

"No," said Caleb, promptly, "though the Eastern men complained a great deal."

"What did the soldiers do when they became sick in hot weather?"

"They died, generally, unless they was shipped up North, or to some of the big camps of hospitals, where they could get special attention."

"But until then were there no ways of shielding them from the heat of the sun?"

"Oh, yes. If the camp hospital was a tent, it had a fly — an extra thickness of canvas, stretched across it to shade the roof an' sides. Then, if any woods was near by, and usually there was, — there's more woodland in old Virginia than in this new state, — some forked sticks an' poles an' leafy tree-boughs would be fetched in, an' fixed so that the ground for eight or ten feet around would be shady."

"Do you remember just how it was done?"

"Do I? Well, I reckon I was on details

at that sort o' work about as often as anybody."

"Won't you do me a great favor? Hire a man and wagon to-morrow — or to-day, if there's time — and go to some of our woodland near town, and get some of the material, and put up such a shade on the south and west sides of our house; that is, if you don't object."

"Object? 'Twould be great fun; make me feel like a boy again, I reckon. But I ought to remind you that the thing won't look a bit pretty, two or three days later, when the leaves begin to fade. Dead leaves an' a white house don't 'compose,' as I heard you say one day to a woman about two calicoes that was contrary to each other. Besides, 'tain't necessary, for double-width sheetin', or two widths of it side by side, an' right out of the store here, would make a better awnin', to say nothin' o' the looks, an' you can afford it easy enough."

"Perhaps, but there are other people who can't, and I want to show off a tree-bough awning to some who need contrivances like it."

"I — see," said Caleb, departing abruptly, while Doctor Taggess exclaimed: —

"And here I've been practising in some of those bake-ovens of houses for thirty years, and never thought of that very simple means of relief! Good day, Mrs. Somerton; I'll go home and tell my wife what I've heard, then I think I'll read some of the penitential Psalms and some choice bits of Proverbs on the mental peculiarities of fools."

The arbor was completed by dark, and on the next day, and for a fortnight afterward, almost every woman who entered the store was invited to step into the garden and see how well, and yet cheaply, the house was shaded from the sun. All were delighted, though some warned the owner that the shade would kill her vines, whereupon Doctor Taggess, who spent parts of several hours in studying the structure, suggested that if the probable copyists were to set their posts and frameworks securely, they might serve as support for quick-growing hardy vines that might be "set" in the spring of the following year, and clamber all over the skeleton roof before

the hottest days came. Thereupon Grace volunteered to write a lot of nursery men to learn what vines, annual or perennial, grew most rapidly and cost least, and to leave the replies in the store for general inspection.

"Doctor," Grace asked during one of the physician's visits of inspection, "where did the settlers of this country come from, that they never think of certain of their own necessities? Don't scold me, please; I'm not going to abuse your darling West; besides, 'tis my West as well as yours, for every interest I have is here. But Eastern farmers and villagers plant shade trees and vines near their houses, unless they can afford to build piazzas, — and perhaps in addition to piazzas. They shade their village streets, too, and many of their highways. Aren't such things the custom in other parts of the United States?"

"They certainly are in my native state, which is Pennsylvania," the Doctor replied, "and some of the handsomest villages and farm-houses I've seen are in Ohio and Kentucky. But I imagine the work was done by

the second or third or fourth generation; I don't believe the original settlers could find the time and strength for such effort. As to our people, they came from a dozen or more states — East, West, and Middle, with a few from the South. I honestly believe they're quite as good as the average of settlers of any state, but I shouldn't wonder if you've failed to comprehend at short acquaintance the settler or the farmer class in general. In a new country one usually finds only people who've been elbowed out of older ones, either by misfortune or bad management, or through families having become too large to get a living out of their old homesteads, and with no land near by that was within reach of their pockets. There are as many causes in farming as in any other business for men trying to make a start somewhere else, but a starter in the farming line is always very poor. Almost any family you might name in this county brought itself and all its goods and implements in a single two-horse wagon. Your things, Caleb told me, filled the greater part of a railway car. Quite a difference, eh?"

"Yet most of the things were ours, when we thought ourselves very poor."

"Just so. So you can't imagine the poverty of these people. They lived in their wagons until they had some sort of roof over their heads; a man who could spend a hundred dollars for lumber and nails and window-sash passed for one of the well-to-do class. Some of them had no money whatever; their nearest neighbors would help them put up a log house, but afterward they had to work pretty hard to keep the wolf from the door until they could grow something to eat and to sell. They had hard times, of so many varieties, that now when they are sure of three meals a day, some cows, pigs, and chickens, credit at a store, and a crop in the ground, they think themselves well off, no matter how many discomforts they may have to endure."

"But, Doctor, they're human; they have hearts and feelings."

"Yes, but they have more endurance than anything else. It has become second nature to them; so some of them would long endure a pain or discomfort rather than relieve it.

Doubt it, if you like, but I am speaking from a great mass of experience. I've heard much of the endurance of the North American Indian, but the Indian is a baby to these farmer-settlers. Endurance is in their every muscle, bone, and nerve, and they pass it down to their children. Eastern babies would scream unceasingly at maladies that some of our youngsters bear without a whimper. Many of the Presidents of the United States were born of just such stock; of course they were examples of the survival of the fittest, for any who are weak in such a country must go to the wall in a hurry, if they chance to escape the grave — and the graveyards are appallingly full."

"And 'tis the women and children that fill them!" Grace said.

"Yes," assented the Doctor. "If I could have my way, no women and children would be allowed in a new section until the men had made decent, comfortable homes, with crops ready for harvest, all of which shows what an impracticable old fool a man of experience may become."

"But a little work, by the men of some of

these places, would make the women and children so much more comfortable!"

"Yes, but the women and children don't think to ask it, and the men don't notice the deficiency."

"But why shouldn't they? Many men elsewhere are perpetually contriving to make their families more comfortable."

"Yes, but seldom unless the necessity of doing so is forced to their attention in some way. Besides, to do so, they must have the contriving, inventive faculty, which is one of the scarcest in human nature!"

"Oh, Doctor! I've often heard that we Americans are the most inventive people in the world."

"So we are, according to the Patent Office reports, though the patents don't average one to a hundred people, and not more than one in ten of them is worth developing. I am right in saying that invention — except, perhaps, of lies — is among the rarest of human qualities. It requires quick perception and a knack at construction, as well as no end of adaptiveness and energy, all of which are themselves rare qualities. Countless generations ached seven or

eight hours of every twenty-four, until a few years ago, when some one invented springy bottoms for beds. Countless generations of men had to cut four times as much wood as now, and innumerable women smoked their eyes out, cooking over open fires, before any one thought of making stoves of stone or of iron plates. Almost every labor-saving contrivance you've seen might have been perfected before it was, if the inventive faculty hadn't been so rare. Why, half of the newest contrivances of the day are so simple and obvious, that smart men, when they see them, want to shoot themselves for not having themselves invented them."

"So, to come back to what we were talking of — the prospect of country women and children being made more comfortable is extremely dismal."

"Not necessarily; country people have their special virtues, though many of them have about as little inventive capacity as so many cows. Still, they're great as copyists. For instance, my wife told me that every girl in the county wanted a dress exactly like one you made of two bits of dead-stock calico. They're

already copying, I'm glad to say, your brushwood shade for the sides of the house. So, if you'll go right on inventing —"

"But I didn't invent the brushwood shade; you yourself heard Caleb tell me of it."

"Oh, yes, after you'd dragged it out of his memory, where it had been doing nothing for almost a quarter of a century."

"I'm sure I didn't design the combination of calicoes; the idea was far older than the calicoes themselves."

"Perhaps, but you adapted it, as you did Caleb's army hospital shade. Don't ever forget that most so-called inventors, including the very greatest, are principally adapters. 'Tis plain to see that you have the faculty, so don't waste any time in pitying those who haven't; just go on, perceiving and inventing — or adapting, if you prefer to call it so. Try it on everything, from clothes and cookery to religion, and you may depend on most of the people hereabouts to copy you to the full measure of their ability. There! I don't think you'll want to hear the sound of my voice again in a month. Caleb isn't the only man who finds it hard to get off of a hobby."

XIV—FUN WITH A CAMERA

FOR some days after Grace's camera arrived there were many customers and commercial travellers who had to wait for hours to see the one person with whom they preferred to transact business in the store, for a camera is procrastination's most formidable rival in the character of a thief of time. Grace made "snap-shots" at almost everything, and John Henry Bustpodder, the most enterprising of Philip's competitors, took great satisfaction in disseminating the statement that he reckoned the new store-keeper's wife was running to seed, for she'd been seen chasing a whirlwind and trying to shoot it with a black box.

But the Somerton customers regarded the general subject from a different standpoint, for Grace surprised some of them with pictures taken, without their knowledge, of themselves in their wagons, or in front of their houses, or

on the way to church. They were not of high quality; but as the best the natives had previously seen were some dreadful tintypes perpetrated annually by a man who frequented county fairs, they were doubly satisfactory, for she would not accept pay for them. She surprised herself, also, sometimes beyond expression, by some of her failures, which were quite as dreadful as anything she had dreamed after almost stepping on snakes — people without heads, or with hands larger than their bodies, or with other faces superimposed upon their own. She also made the full quantity and variety of other blunders peculiar to amateurs, and she stained her finger-tips so deeply that Philip pretended to suspect her of the cigarette habit; but she persisted until she succeeded in getting some pictures which she was not ashamed to send to her aunt and to some of her acquaintances in the city.

Caleb, who endeavored to master everything mechanical and technical that came within his view, took so great interest in the camera, even begging permission to see the developing process, that Philip one day said to him : —

"Caleb, if your interest in that plaything continues, I shan't be surprised if some day I hear you advance the theory that even photography is a means of grace," and Caleb cheerily replied: —

"Like enough, for anythin's a means o' grace, if you know how to use it right."

"Even snakes?" Grace asked, with a smile that was checked by a shudder.

"Of course. The principal use o' snakes, so far as I can see, is to scare lots o' people almost to death, once in a while, an' a good scare is the only way o' makin' some people see the error o' their ways."

"H'm!" said Philip. "That's rather rough on my wife, eh?"

"Oh, no," said Caleb. "Some folks — mentionin' no names, an' hopin' no offence 'll be took, as I once read somewhere — some folks are so all-fired nice, an' good, an' lucky, an' pretty much everythin' else that's right, that I do believe they need to be scared 'most to death once in a while, just to remind 'em how much they've got to be thankful for, an' how sweet it is to live."

Grace blushed, and said: —

"Thank you, Caleb; but if you're right, I'm afraid I'm doomed to see snakes frequently for the remainder of my natural life."

"Speakin' o' snakes as a means o' grace," said Caleb, "p'r'aps 'twould int'rest you to know that some awful drunkards in this county was converted by snakes. Yes'm; snakes in their boots scared them drunkards into the kingdom."

"In — their — boots?" murmured Grace, with a wild stare. "How utterly dreadful! I didn't suppose that the crawling things — "

"Your education in idioms hasn't been completed, my dear," said Philip. "'Snakes in their boots' is Westernese for delirium tremens."

"Oh, Caleb! How could you? But do tell me how photography is to be a means of grace."

"I'll do it — as soon as I can find out. I'm askin' the question myself, just now, an' I reckon I'll find the answer before I stop tryin'. There don't seem to be anythin' about your camera that'll spile, an' I've read that book o' instructions through an' through, till I've got it 'most by heart. Would you mind lettin' me try to make a pictur' or two some day?"

"Not in the least. You're welcome to the camera and outfit at almost any time."

Meanwhile Grace continued to "have lots of fun" with the camera. She resolved to have a portrait collection of all the babies in the town; and as she promised prints to the mothers of the subjects, she had no difficulty in obtaining "sittings." To the great delight of the mothers, the pictures were usually far prettier than the babies; for Grace smiled and gesticulated and chirruped at the infants until she cajoled some expression into little faces usually blank. Incidentally she got some mother pictures that impressed her deeply and made her serious and thoughtful for hours at a time.

Her greatest success, however, according to the verdict of the people, was a print with which she dashed into the store one day, exclaiming to her husband and Caleb: —

"Do look at this! I exposed the plate one Sunday morning, weeks ago, and then mislaid the holder, so that I didn't find it until to-day."

It was a picture of the front of the church, taken a few moments before service began —

the moments, dear to country congregations, in which the people, too decorous to whisper in church, yet longing to chat with acquaintances whom they had not met in days or weeks, gathered in little groups outside the building. The light had been exactly right; also the distance and the focus, and the people so well distributed that the picture was almost as effective as if its material had been arranged and "composed" by an artist.

"Je—ru—salem!" exclaimed Caleb. "Why, the people ain't much bigger than tacks, an' yet I can pick out ev'ry one of 'em by name. Well, well!"

He took the print to the door and studied it more closely. When he returned with it, he continued:—

"That's a great pictur'. It ought to have a name."

"H'm!" said Philip, winking at his wife, "how would this do: 'Not exactly a means of grace, but within fifteen minutes of it'—eh?"

"It's a mighty sight nigher than that," said Caleb, solemnly, "besides bein' the best

'throw-in' that's come to light yet. Give copies of that away to customers that don't ever go to church, an' they'll begin to go, hopin' they'll stand a chance o' bein' took in the next; an' if they get under the droppin's of the sanctuary, why, Brother Grateway an' the rest of us'll try to do the rest. Grateway needs some encouragement o' that kind, for he's sort o' down in the mouth about nothin' comin' of his efforts with certain folks in this town. He's dropped warnin's and exhortations on 'em, in season an' out o' season, for quite a spell, but he was tellin' me only yesterday that it seemed like the seed in the parable, that was sowed on stony ground. An' say — Je — ru — salem! — when did you say you took that?"

"Two or three weeks ago," Grace replied.

"An' you didn't develop it till to-day?"

"Not until to-day."

"An' the pictur' has been on the plate all that time?"

"In one way, yes. That is, the plate had been exposed at the subjects, and they had been impressed upon it by the light, although

it still looked plain and blank, until the developing fluid was poured upon it."

"How long would it stay so, an' yet be fit to be developed?"

"Oh, years, I suppose. Travellers in Africa and elsewhere have carried such plates, and exposed them, and not developed them until they returned to civilization, perhaps a year or two later."

"I want to know! Got any other plate as old as the one this pictur' was made from?"

"Yes, one; it was in the other side of the same holder."

"Would you mind developin' it to-night, in your kitchen, before company? Nobody that's fussy — only Brother Grateway."

"You know I'll do anything to oblige you and him, Caleb."

"Hooray! Excuse me, please, while I go off an' make sure o' his comin'."

"What do you suppose is on Caleb's mind now?" Grace asked, as Caleb and the picture disappeared.

"I give it up," Philip replied, "though I

shan't be surprised if 'tis something relative to a camera being a means of grace."

"I can't imagine how."

"Perhaps not, but let's await — literally speaking — developments."

"He'll be here," said Caleb, a few moments later; he looked gleeful as he said it, and shuffled his feet in a manner so suggestive of dancing that Grace pretended to be shocked, at which Caleb reddened. During the remainder of the afternoon he looked as happy as if he had collected a long-deferred bill, or given the dreaded "malary" a new repulse. He hurried Philip and Grace home to supper, so that the kitchen might sooner be free for photographic purposes, and dusk had scarcely lost itself in darkness when he closed the store and appeared at the house with Pastor Grateway, who expressed himself exuberantly concerning the picture of his church and congregation; but Caleb cut him short by saying: —

"Ev'rythin' ready, Mis' Somerton? Good! Come along, Brother Grateway — you, too, Philip."

While the trays and chemicals were being arranged, Caleb explained to the pastor that photographs were first taken on glass plates, chemically treated, and that the picture proper was made by light passing through a plate to the surface of sensitized paper. When the red lamp was lighted, Caleb continued: —

"Now, when Mis' Somerton lays a plate in that tray, you'll see it's as blank as a sheet o' paper, or as the faces o' some o' the ungodly that you've been preachin' at an' laborin' with, year in and year out. You can't see nothin' on it, no matter if you use a hundred-power magnifyin' glass. But the pictur' 's there all the same; it was took weeks ago; might ha' been months or years, but it's there, an' yet the thing goes on lookin' blank till the developer is poured on it — just like Mis' Somerton's doin' now. Now keep your eye on it. It don't seem to mind, at first — goes on lookin' as blank as the faces o' case-hardened sinners at a revival meetin'. But bimeby — pretty soon — "

"See those spots!" exclaimed the minister.

"Eh? Why, to be sure. Well, a photo-

graph plate is a good deal like measles an' religion — it first breaks out in spots. But keep on lookin' — see it come!"

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" exclaimed the minister.

"Seemed miraculous to me, first time I see it," said Caleb. "I'd have been skeered if Mis' Somerton hadn't said 'twas all right, for no magic stories I ever read held a candle to it. But keep on lookin'. See one thing comin' after another, an' all of 'em comin' plainer an' stronger ev'ry minute? Could you 'a' b'lieved it, if you hadn't seen it with your own eyes? An' even now you've seen it, don't it 'pear 'bout as mysterious as the ways o' Providence? I've read all Mis' Somerton's book tells about it, an' a lot more in the cyclopeedy, but it ain't no less wonderful than it was."

"Absolutely marvellous!" replied the minister.

"That's what it is. Now, Brother Grateway, that plate was just like the people you was tellin' me 'bout yesterday, that you was clean discouraged over. You've been pilin' warnin's an' exhortations on 'em, an' they didn't seem

to mind 'em worth a cent — 'peared just as blank as they ever were. But the pictur' was there, an' there 'twas boun' to stay, as long as the plate lasted — locked up in them chemicals, to be sure, but there it was all the same, an' out it came when the developer was poured on an' soaked in. An' so, John Grateway, all that you've ever put into them people is there, somewhere — heaven only knows where an' how, for human natur' 's a mighty sight queerer than a photograph plate, an' to bring out what's in it takes about as many kinds o' developer as there are people. Mebbe you haven't got the right developer, but it's somewhere, waitin' for its time — mebbe it'll be a big scare, or a dyin' wife, or a mother's trouble. Religious talk rolled off o' me for years, like water from a duck's back, till one day I fell between two saw-logs in the crick, an' thought 'twas all up with me — that was the developer I needed. So when you say your prayers to-night, don't forget to give thanks for havin' seen a photograph plate developed, an' after this you go right on takin' pictur's, so to speak, with all your might, an' when you find you can't finish them, hearten

yourself up by rememberin' that there's Somebody that knows millions of times as much about the developin' business as you do, an' gives His entire time an' attention to it."

"Photography is a means of grace, Caleb," said Philip, and Grace joined in the confession.

XV — CAUSE AND EFFECT

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"EVER have any trouble with your bath-tub arrangements?" Caleb asked Philip one day when both men were at leisure.

"No," said Philip, somewhat surprised at the question.

"Think the man that put 'em in did the work at a fair price?"

"Oh, yes. But what's on your mind, Caleb? It can't be that you're going to start a plumber in business here? I don't know what crueler revenge a man could take on his worst enemies."

"No," said Caleb. "Heapin' coals o' fire on a man's head, accordin' to Scriptur', is my only way o' takin' revenge nowadays. It most generally does the other feller some good, besides takin' a lot o' the devil out o' yours truly. But about bathin' — well, I

learned the good of it when I was a hospital nurse for a spell in the army, an' I've been pretty particular 'bout it ever since, though my bath-tub's only an army rubber blanket with four slats under the edges, to keep the water from gettin' away. I've talked cleanliness a good deal for years, an' told folks that there wa'n't no patent on my kind o' bath-tub; but it ain't over an' above handy, an' most folks in these parts have so much to do that they put off any sort o' work that they ain't kicked into doin'. So, the long an' short of it is that I'm goin' to back a bathin' establishment, for the use of the general public."

"You'll have your labor for your pains, Caleb."

"Don't be too sure o' that. Besides, I'm dead certain that bathin's a means o' grace. Doc Taggess says so, too, an' he ought to know, from his knowledge o' one side o' human nature. He knows a powerful lot about the other side, too, for what Taggess don't know about the human soul is more'n I ever expect to find out. Taggess is a Christian, if ever there was one."

"Right you are, but — have you thought over this project carefully?"

"Been thinkin' over it off an' on, ever since your contraption was put in. You see, it's this way. I own a little house that I lent money on from time to time, till the owner died an' I had to take it in — the mortgages got to be bigger than the house was worth. It's framed heavy enough for a barn, so the upstairs floor'll be strong enough to hold a mighty big tank o' water, an' the well is one o' the deep never-failin' kind. Black Sam, the barber, used to be body-servant to a man down South, an' knows how to give baths — I've had him take care o' me sometimes, when the malary stiffened my j'ints so I couldn't use my arms much. Well, Sam's to have the house, rent free, an' move his barber shop into it. He don't get more'n an hour or two o' work a day, so he'll have plenty o' time to 'tend to bath-house customers that don't know the ropes for themselves, an' we're to divide the receipts. I'm goin' to advertise it well. How's this?" and Caleb took from under the counter

a cardboard stencil which he had cut as follows: —

A BATH FOR THE PRICE OF A DRINK AND A CIGAR, AND IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER THAN BOTH OF THEM.

"That's a good advertisement, Caleb — a very good advertisement. But I thought five cents was the customary price of a drink or a cigar out here?"

"So 'tis — ten cents for both; but I've ciphered that it'll pay, an' Black Sam's satisfied. You see, fuel's cheap; besides, in summer time the upstairs part of that house, right under the roof, is about as hot, 'pears to me, as the last home o' the wicked, so if the tank's filled overnight, the water'll be warm by mornin'."

"You've a long head, Caleb. Still, I've my doubts about your getting customers. 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink' — you've heard the old saying?"

"Often, but some folks in this country would go through fire — an' even water — for the sake

o' somethin' new. I've cal'lated to make a free bath a throw-in' to some o' our customers that I could name, but first I'm goin' to try it on some old chums. I'm goin' to have the grand openin' on Decoration Day, an' try it on all the members of our Grand Army post. The boys'll do anythin' for an old comrade, specially if he's post commander, as I be. There was all sorts in the army, an' sometimes it's seemed to me that the right ones didn't get killed, nor even die afterwards. There's three or four of 'em in this county that makes it a p'int o' gettin' howlin' drunk on Decoration Day, which kind o' musses up the spirit o' the day for the rest of us. They're to have the first baths; I'm goin' to 'gree with 'em that if a bath don't make 'em feel better than a drink, I'll supply the liquor afterwards; but if it does, why, then they're not to touch a drop all day. Black Sam reckons that by bein' spry he can curry 'em down, so to speak, at the rate of a man ev'ry ten minutes, an' there's only seventeen men in the post. I reckon that them that don't drink'll feel just as good

after bein' cleaned up, as them that do drink, an' I'm goin' to get 'em to talk it up all day, so's to keep the rummies up to the mark. The tank lumber's all ready; so's the carpenter, an' I reckon I'll write that plumber to-day."

Philip told Grace of Caleb's new project, and Grace was astonished and delighted, and then thoughtful and very silent for a few minutes, after which she said:—

"Some of the New York baths have women's days, or women's hours. I wonder if Black Sam couldn't teach the business to his wife?" —a remark which Philip repeated to Caleb, and for days afterward Caleb's hat was poised farther back on his head than usual, and more over one ear.

"This enterprise of Caleb's," Grace said to her husband, "has set me wondering anew what Caleb does with his money. He has no family; his expenses are very small, for he is his own housekeeper and pays no rent, and you pay him three hundred dollars a year."

"That isn't all his income," Philip replied, "for he gets once in three months a pension

check of pleasing size. Still, you would be astonished to know how little cash he draws on account, and how great a quantity of goods is charged to him from month to month. I've been curious enough about it, at times, to trace the items from the ledger back to the day-book, and I learned that his account for groceries, food-stuffs generally, and dry goods is far larger than our own. As for patent medicines, he seems to consume them by the gallon — perhaps with the hope of curing his malaria. I've sometimes been at the point of asking him what he does with all of it; if he weren't so transparently, undoubtedly honest, I should imagine that he was doing a snug little private business on his own account; for, as you know, he pays only original cost price for what he buys."

"There is but one explanation," Grace said after a moment or two of thought. "It is plain that he is engaged in charitable work, and is living up to the spirit of the injunction not to let his left hand know what his right hand is doing. And oh, Phil, long as we've been here, — almost half a year, — we've never done any charitable work whatever."

"Haven't we, indeed! You are continually doing all sorts of kindnesses for all sorts of people, and as you and I are one, and as whatever you do is right in your husband's eyes, I think I may humbly claim to be your associate in charity."

"But I've done no charities. Everything I do seems to bring more business to the store. I've no such intention, but the fact remains. I never give away anything, for I never see an opportunity, but it seems that Caleb does."

"Ah, well, question him yourself, and if your suspicions prove correct, don't let us be outdone in that kind of well-doing."

"Caleb," Grace asked at her first opportunity, "aren't there any deserving objects of charity in Claybanks?"

"Well," Caleb replied, "that depends on what you mean by deservin', an' by charity — too. I s'pose none of us — except p'r'aps you — deserve anythin' in particular, an' as you seem to have ev'rythin' you want, there ain't any anyhow. But there's some that's needy, an' that'll get along better for a lift once in a while."

"Do tell me about some of them. I don't want any one to suffer if my husband and I can prevent it."

"That sounds just like you, but I don't exactly see what you can do. Fact is, you have to know the folks mighty well, or you're likely to do more harm'n good, for the best o' folks seem to be spiled when they get somethin' for nothin'. But there's some of our people that's had their ups an' downs, — principally downs, — an' a little help now an' then does 'em a mighty sight o' good. There's women that's lost their husbands, an' have to scratch gravel night an' day to feed their broods. Watchin' the ways of some of 'em's made me almost b'lieve the old yarn about the bird that tears itself to pieces to feed its young."

"Oh, Caleb!"

"Fact. There's no knowin' what you can see 'till you look for it good an' hard."

"But food is so cheap in this country that I didn't suppose the poorest could suffer. Corn-meal less than a cent a pound, flour two cents, meat only four or five — "

"Yes, but folks that don't have grist-mills,

nor animals to kill, would put it the other way; they'd say that dollars an' cents are awfully dear. Why, Mis' Somerton, when some folks, that I could name, comes into the store with their truck to trade for things, an' I see 'em lookin' at this thing, an' that, an' t'other, that shows what they're wantin,' and needin,' an' can't get, — oh, it brings Crucifixion Day right before my eyes — that's just what it does. I've seen lots o' sad things in my day — like most men, I s'pose. I've seen hundreds o' men shot to pieces, an' thousands dyin' by inches, but you never can guess what it was that broke me up most an' longest."

"Probably not; so, that being the case, do tell me."

"Well, one day I'd just weighed out a pound o' tea, with a lot of other stuff that Mis' Taggess was goin' to call for, an' a widder woman that had been tradin' two or three pound o' butter for some things, picked up the paper o' tea, an' looked at it, an' held it kind o' close to her face, an' sniffed at it. She was as plain-featured a woman as you can find hereabouts, which is sayin' a good deal,

but as she smelled o' that tea her face changed, an' changed, an' changed, till it reminded me of a picture I once saw in somebody's house — 'Ecstacy' was the name of it; so I said: —

"'I reckon you're a judge o' good tea' (for Mis' Taggess won't have any but the best) 'an' that you kind o' like it, too?'

"'Like it?' says she, wavin' the paper o' tea across her face an' then puttin' it down sharp-like, 'I like it about as much as I like the comin' o' Sunday,' which was comin' it pretty strong, for I didn't know any woman that was more religious, or that had better reason to want a day of rest. An' yet she was just the nervous, tired kind, to which a cup o' good tea is meat an' drink an' newspapers an' a hand-organ besides; so I says: —

"'Better buy a little o' this, then, while we've got it. I'm a pretty good judge o' tea myself, an' we never had any to beat this.'

"'Buy it?' says she. 'What with?'

"'Well,' says I, knowin' her to be honest, 'if you've traded out all your truck, I'll

charge it, an' you can settle for it when you bring in some more, or mebbe some cash.'

"'Buy tea!' says she, lookin' far-away-like. 'I hain't been well enough off to drink tea since my husband died, though there's been nights when I haven't been able to sleep for thinkin' of it.'

"Think o' that! An' there was me, that's had two cups or more ev'ry night for years, an' thought I couldn't live without it! I come mighty nigh to chokin' to death, but I done up another pound as quick as I could, an' some white sugar too, an' I shoved 'em over to her, an' says I:—

"'Here's a sin-offerin' from a penitent soul, an' I don't know a better altar for it than your tea-kettle.'

"She was kind of offish at first, but thinkin' of her goin' without tea made me kind o' leaky about the eyes, an' that broke her down, an' she told me, 'fore she knowed what she was doin', about the awful hard time she an' her young ones had had, though before that nobody'd ever knowed her to give a single grunt, for she was as independent as she was

poor. After that I often gave her a lift, in one way or other. She kicked awful hard at first; but I reminded her that the Bible said that part o' true religion was to visit the fatherless an' widders in their 'fliction, so she oughtn't to put stumblin'-blocks in the way of a man who was tryin' to live right; an' as I didn't have no time for makin' visits myself, it was only fair to let me send a substitute, in the shape of comfort for her an' the young ones, an' she 'greed, after a spell, to look at it in that light."

"Caleb, are there many more people of that kind in the town?"

"No — no — not quite as bad off as she was, in some ways, and yet in other ways some of 'em are worse. I mean drunkards' families. How a drunkard's wife stays alive at all beats me; the Almighty must 'a' put somethin' in women that we men don't know nothin' about. After lots o' tryin', I made up my mind the only way to help a drunkard's family is to reform the drunkard, so I laid low, an' picked my time, an' when the man had about a ton o' remorse on him, as all

drunkards do have once in a while, I'd bargain with him that if he'd stop drinkin' I'd see his family didn't suffer while he was makin' a fresh start. I made out 'twas a big thing for me to do, for they knowed I was sickly and weak, an' if I saved my money, instead o' layin' it out on 'em, I could go off an' take a long rest, an' p'r'aps get to be somethin' more than skin an' bones an' malary. It most gen'rally fetched 'em. It's kept me poor, spite o' my havin' pretty good pay an' nobody o' my own to care for, but there was no one else to do it, except Doc Taggess an' his wife: they've done more good o' that kind than anybody'll know till Judgment Day."

"There'll be some one else in future, Caleb. Tell me whom to begin with, and how, and I shall be extremely thankful to you."

"Just what I might 'a' knowed you would 'a' said, though seems to me you're already helpin' ev'rybody in your own way."

"But I'm spending no money. As a great favor tell me who it is for whom you're doing most, and let me relieve you of it, if

only that you may use your money in some other way."

"That's mighty hearty o' you, but I reckon it wouldn't work. You see it's this way. You remember One-Arm Ojam, from Middle Crick township?"

"That tall, dashing-looking Southerner?"

"Exactly. Well, you see he lost his arm fightin' for the South — lost it at Gettysburg, where I got some bullets that threw my machinery out o' gear considerable, besides one that's stuck closer'n a brother ever since. Well, he don't draw no pension, — 'tain't necessary to state the reasons, — but I get a middlin' good one. He was grumblin' pretty hard one day 'bout how tough it was on a man to fight the battle o' life single-handed, an' says I to him, knowin' he drank pretty hard: —

"'It must be, when with t'other hand he loads up with stuff that cripples his head too.'

"He 'lowed that that kind o' talk riled him, an' I said I was glad it did, an' we jawed along for a spell, like old soldiers can when they get goin', till all of a sudden he says: —

"'A man that gets a pension don't have to drink to keep him goin'.'

"'Well, Ojam,' says I, 'if that's a fact, an' I don't say it ain't, you can stop drinkin' right now, if you want to.'

"'What do you mean?' says he.

"'Just what I say,' says I. 'My pension's yours, from this on, so long's you don't drink.'

"'I ain't goin' to be bought over to be a Yank,' says he.

"'I don't want you to be a Yank,' says I. 'You're an American, an' that's the best thing that any old vet can be. I want to buy you over to be a clear-headed man. I've got nothin' to make by it, but it'll be the makin' o' you.'

"Well, he went off mad, an' he told his wife an' young ones, an' in a day or two he came back, an' says he: —

"'Caleb, I ain't a plum fool; but if you're dead sot on bein' one, why, I'll take that pension o' yourn, the way you said.'

"So I shelled out the last quarter's money at once, an' then began the hardest fight One-Arm Ojam ever got into. He 'lowed afterwards that

'twas tougher than Gettysburg, an' lasted 'bout a hundred times as long. 'Fore that, when he hankered for a drink, he'd shell a bushel o' corn by hand, an' bring it in to Bustpodder's store, an' trade it for a quart, but now he had money enough to buy 'most a bar'l of the sort of stuff that he drank. There's a tough lot o' fellows up in his section, — 'birds of a feather flock together,' you know, — an' they made fun o' him, an' nagged him most to death, till one day he owned up to me that he was in a new single-handed fight that was harder'n the old one.

"'You idjit,' says I, 'when you got in a hot place in the war you didn't try to fight single-handed, did you? You got with a squad, or a comp'ny, or regiment, didn't you, so's to have all the help you could get, didn't you?'

"''Course I did,' says he.

"'Then,' says I, 'what's the matter with your j'inin' the Sons o' Temperance, an' j'inin' the church, too?' Well, ma'am, that knocked him so cold that he turned ash-colored, an' his knees rattled; but says I, 'I've got my opinion of a man that charged with

Pickett at Gettysburg an' afterwards plays coward anywhere else.'

"That fetched him. He j'ined the Sons, an' he j'ined the church, an' rememberin' that the best way to keep a recruit from desertin' is to put him in the front rank at once, an' keep him at it, some of us egged him on until he became a local preacher an' started a lodge o' Sons o' Temperance in his section. He's offered two or three times to give up the pension, for he's got sort o' forehanded, spite o' havin' only one hand to do it with, but as I knowed he was spendin' all of it, an' more too, on men that he's tryin' to straighten up an' pull out o' holes, I said, 'No.' For, you see, I'd been wonderin' for years what a man that had had his heart sot on doin' good in the world, as mine was before the war, should 'a' been shot most to pieces at Gettysburg for, but now I'd found out; for if I hadn't got shot, I wouldn't 'a' got the pension that reformed One-Arm Ojam, an' is reformin' all the rest o' Middle Crick Township. 'God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform;' but I s'pose you've helped sing that in church?"

XVI — DECORATION DAY[1]

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SELDOM does any community have the good fortune to have two great events fall upon a single day, but on May 30, 188–, Claybanks and vicinity palpitated from centre to circumference over the cele-

[1] In most states of the American Union the 30th of May is a legal holiday called Decoration Day, the purpose being to honor, by various means, the memory of the soldiers who died in defence of the Union in the great Civil War of 1861–65. More than a quarter of a million survivors of the Union army are members of a fraternal society called the Grand Army of the Republic, which is divided into about seven thousand local branches called Posts. The organization is military in form, each post having a body of officers with military titles and insignia. All posts carry the national colors in their parades, and are expected to be uniformed in close imitation of the service dress of the army of the United States. A few posts bear arms, and each member of the order wears a medal made by the national government from cannon captured from the enemy. The posts always parade on Decoration Day, and at cemeteries where soldiers of the Union army have been interred they read their "Ritual of the Dead" and decorate the graves with flags and flowers. In recent years the order has decorated the graves of

bration of Decoration Day and the opening of the Claybanks Bath-house. The public buildings did not close; neither did the stores, for the entire community flocked to the town, and the stores were the only possible lounging-places. Grace had learned, to her great regret, which was shared by Caleb, that the local Grand Army post never paraded in uniform, for the reason that the members found it too hard to supply themselves with sufficient clothing, for every day and Sunday use, to afford a suit to be worn only a single day of the year, and she had told Caleb that it was a shame that the government did not supply its old soldiers with uniforms in which to celebrate their one great day, and Caleb had replied that perhaps if it did, the Southerner Ojam, who had charged with Pickett at Gettysburg, and who always marched with the "boys" to decorate the graves, might feel ruled out, and then Grace had unburdened

dead Confederates also, and there have been many friendly interchanges of civilities and hospitalities between the Grand Army of the Republic and the Southern survivors' organization known as The United Confederate Veterans — an order which has about fifty thousand members.

her heart to Philip, and given him so little peace about it that finally he became so interested in the Grand Army of the Republic that he studied all the local members as intently as if he were looking for a long-lost brother.

But when the sun of Decoration Day arose, the centre of interest was the bath-house. The veterans who had been selected for the opening ceremonies approached the place as tremblingly as a lot of penitents for public baptism; some of them were so appalled at the prospect that they approached the house by devious ways, even by sneaking through various back yards and climbing fences. Caleb himself was somewhat mystified by a request from Black Sam that he would remain out of sight until the ordeal had ended; and as the store filled early with customers, and Philip was obliged to be absent for an hour or two, Caleb was compelled to comply with the request, after sending word to the non-drinking members to keep the others from the vicinity of Bustpodder's store and all other places where liquor was sold. The caution did not

seem to be necessary, however; for not a man emerged from the bath-house to answer the questions of the multitude that was consuming with curiosity, and from which arose from time to time sundry cheers and jeers that must have been exasperating in the extreme.

Suddenly Philip appeared in the store, and said: —

"Caleb, you're wanted at the bath-house. Better go up there at once. No, nothing wrong; but go."

Business went on, and Grace did her best to attend to a score of feminine customers at one and the same time; but suddenly the entire crowd hurried out of the store, for the sound of the G. A. R.'s fife and drum, playing "We'll Rally Round the Flag," floated through the open doors and windows.

"I suppose we, too, may as well look at the procession," said Philip, moving toward the door.

"Oh, Phil!" exclaimed Grace, looking up the street, "they have guns, and they're in uniforms. How strange! Caleb told me they hadn't any."

"True, but Caleb is a great man to bring new things to pass."

"They're all in uniform but three," said Grace, as the little procession approached the store. "The fifer and drummer and the man with the flag haven't any. What a—"

"The fifer and drummer were not soldiers. The man with the flag is One-Arm Ojam, who was in Pickett's great charge at Gettysburg, and he's in full Confederate gray."

So he was, even to a gray hat, with the Stars and Bars on its front, and a long gray plume at its side, and the magnificent Southern swagger with which he bore the colors was — after the flag itself — the grandest feature of the procession. The multitude on both sides of the street applauded wildly, but the old soldiers marched as steadily as if they were on duty, for the uniforms and muskets were recalling old times in their fulness. Suddenly, as the procession reached the front of the store, Post-Commander Caleb Wright, sword in hand, shouted: —

"Halt! Front! Right — dress! Front! Present — arms!"

To the front came the muskets, Caleb's sword-hilt was raised to his chin, Ojam drooped the flag, and Philip doffed his hat.

"Why did they do that, I wonder?" asked Grace.

"Oh, some notion of Caleb's, I suppose," Philip replied.

"Shoulder — arms!" shouted Caleb. "Order — arms! Three cheers for the uniforms!"

Eighteen slouch hats waved in the air, an eighteen-soldier-power roar arose, the fife shrieked three times, the drummer rolled three ruffles. Then One-Arm Ojam, the flag rested against his armless shoulder, waved his gray hat picturesquely, and roared: —

"Three cheers for the giver of the uniforms!"

When a second round of cheering ended, a man in the ranks shouted "Speech!" and the word was echoed by several others. Then Philip, while his wife's lips became shapeless in wide-mouthed wonder, removed his hat and said: —

"Fellow-Americans, the uniforms weren't a gift. They're merely a partial payment, on

my own account, for what you did for mine and me when I was very young. This is one of the proudest days of my life; for though I took the measure of each of you by guess-work, no man's clothes seem a very bad fit." Then he returned abruptly into the store, followed by his wife, who exclaimed: —

"You splendid, dreadful fellow! You were letting me believe that Caleb did it!"

"So he did, my dear. 'Twas your telling me the story of Caleb's pension that set me thinking hard about the old soldiers and what they did, and of how little consideration they get. Besides, I'm always wishing to do something special to please Caleb, and this was the first chance I'd seen in a long time. His fear of One-Arm Ojam being estranged if the Post got into uniform troubled me for a day or two, but I seem to have taken Ojam's measure — in both senses — quite well."

Suddenly Grace began to laugh, and continued until she became almost helpless, Philip meanwhile looking as if he wondered what he had said that could have been so amusing.

"If your Uncle Jethro could have been here!" she said as soon as she could.

"To be horrified at the manner in which a lot of his money has been spent? If I'm not mistaken, 'twill have been the cheapest advertising this establishment ever did, though I hadn't the slightest thought of business while I was planning it."

"That isn't what I meant," Grace said. "I was thinking of your uncle's disgust when he learned that one of your reasons for wishing to live in New York was that you might study art. Your studies never went far beyond sketching the human figure, poor boy; but if he were here to-day, and you were to tell him that your art studies, such as they were, had enabled you to guess correctly the proportions of eighteen suits of men's clothes, imagine his astonishment — if you can."

Then the laughter was resumed, and Philip assisted at it, until Caleb entered the store and said: —

"We've been comparin' notes, — the boys an' me, an' we've agreed that it beat any surprises we had in the war; for there, we always knowed,

the surprises was layin' in wait for us a good deal of the time. How you managed it beats me."

"Phil, didn't even Caleb know what was going on?"

"Not until he left the store about half an hour ago."

"Oh, you splendid, smart—"

"Spare my blushes, dear girl. As to the things, Caleb, I had them addressed to Black Sam, whom I let into the secret, and I had them wagoned at night from the railway to the bath-house, where he unpacked them and hid them in one of his rooms."

"I want to know! But what put you up to thinkin' o' doin' the greatest thing that—"

"'Twas a story my wife told me, about the way you dispose of your pension. 'Twas all of your own doing, after all, you see."

Caleb looked sheepish, said something about the "boys" becoming uneasy unless the march was resumed, and made haste to rejoin his command, but stopped halfway to the door, and said:—

"Mebbe 'tain't any o' my business, but as I'm

Commander of the Post, an' yet you've been managin' it most o' the mornin', an' I hadn't time to ask the why an' wherefore o' things, — how did you get Ojam to carry our flag?"

"Oh, I dared him."

"An' he, bein' a Southerner, wouldn't take a dare?"

"On the contrary, it needed no dare. He said he'd been longing for such a chance for many years; for you'd reminded him one day that he was an American, and that plain American was good enough for you. 'Twas a case exactly like that of the uniforms, Caleb; 'twas you that did it — not I."

Again Caleb looked sheepish, and this time he succeeded in rejoining his command and marching it toward the cemetery, followed by the entire populace.

"We may as well go, too," said Philip, closing the store.

"But not empty-handed," Grace said, snatching a basket from a hook and hurrying into her garden, where she quickly cut everything that showed any color or bloom, saying as she did so: —

"Perhaps they don't use flowers here, but 'twill do no harm to offer them."

"I'll get out the horse and buggy; that basket will be very heavy," said Philip.

"Not as heavy as the veterans' guns — and some widow's memories," Grace replied; "so let us walk."

Together they hurried along the dusty road and joined the irregular procession of civilians that followed the veterans. The Claybanks "God's acre" bore no resemblance to the park-like cemeteries which Grace had seen near New York, nor did it display any trace of the neatness which marked the little enclosure in which rested the dead of Grace's native village. A man with a scythe had been sent in on the previous day, to make the few soldiers' graves approachable; but weeds and brambles were still abundant near the fence, and Grace shuddered when she saw that most of the graves were marked only by lettered boards instead of stones, and that tiny graves were numerous. Evidently Claybanks was a dangerous place for infants.

Soon she saw that the usefulness of flowers

on Decoration Day was not unknown at Claybanks, and, as the "Ritual of the Dead" had already been read and as the veterans were informally passing from grave to grave, she made her way to Caleb, and said reproachfully:—

"Why didn't you ask me for some flowers?"

"I 'lowed that I would," Caleb replied, looking at Grace's basket, "but Mis' Taggess came to me, an' says she, 'Don't you do it, or she'll cut everything in sight,' an' from the looks o' things I reckon that's just what you've done. It's a pity, too, for we hain't got many soldier-dead, an' their graves is pretty well covered."

"In the paht of the Saouth that I come from," ventured One-Arm Ojam, "ev'rybody's graves has flowers put on 'em on Memorial Day, an' the women an' children do most of it."

"You Grand Army men won't feel hurt if the custom is started here, will you?" Grace asked of Caleb.

"Not us!" was the reply; so Grace begged the women and children to assist her, and within a few moments every grave in the cemetery had a bit of bloom upon it, and the women

had informally resolved that the custom should be followed thereafter on Decoration Day.

Then the Grand Army Post was called to order, and marched back to the town, led by the fifer and drummer and followed by the people.

"Is that all?" Grace asked, when the store had been reopened, and Caleb entered, unclasped his sword-belt, and gazed affectionately at the sword.

"All of what?"

"All of the day's ceremonies."

"In one way, yes, but we vets have a sort o' camp-fire; we get together in my room, after dark, an' swap yarns, an' sing songs, an' have somethin' to eat an' drink, an' manage to have a jolly good time."

"I hope you'll leave the windows open while you sing."

"We'll have to all the time, I reckon, the weather bein' as hot as 'tis, but I know the boys'll be pleased to hear that you asked it."

"Oh, wouldn't I like to be a mouse in the corner to-night!" Grace said after she had laid away the very last of the supper dishes and

dropped into a hammock-chair on the coolest side of the house. "A mouse in the corner, and hear the war-stories those veterans will tell! They looked so unlike themselves to-day."

"Possibly because of Caleb's bath-house," Philip suggested, "although I don't doubt that Caleb would be gracious enough to hint that the new uniforms also had some transforming effect."

"What do you suppose they will have to eat and drink in Caleb's room? I wish I dared make something nice and send it in. Let me see; we've a lot of the potted meats and fancy biscuits and other things that I ordered from the city a week or two ago, to abate the miseries of summer housekeeping. I could make half a dozen kinds of biscuit sandwiches in ten minutes, and I could give them iced tea with lemon and sugar, and oh —"

"Well?"

"There's been so much excitement to-day that I entirely forgot the grand surprise I'd planned for some of the farmers' wives. I declare 'tis too bad! Our ice-cream freezer came last week, you know, and this morning I made the

first lot, and I was going to serve saucers of it to some of the women who came to the store — it seems that ice-cream is unknown in this country. But your surprise, of putting the Grand Army men into uniforms, put everything else out of my mind for the day. Let's bring it from the ice-house, and send it over to Caleb's room to the veterans!"

"My dear girl, the cream will keep till to-morrow, so do try to possess your soul in peace, and leave those veterans to their own devices. Old soldiers are reputed to be willing to eat and drink anything or nothing if they may have a feast of war-stories."

"When do you suppose they'll begin to sing?"

"Not having been a soldier, I can't say. Perhaps not at all, if Caleb's plan of keeping the drinking men from liquor has succeeded."

"Phil, don't be so horrid. Oh! — what is that?"

It was the beginning of a song — not badly sung, either — "'Tis a Way We Have in the Army." Some of the words were ridiculous, but there could be no criticism of the spirit of the

singers. Advancing cautiously, under cover of semi-darkness and the brushwood arbor, Grace saw so many figures near the front of the house that she could not doubt that the Grand Army Post was tendering her or her husband the compliment of a serenade, so she applauded heartily. Another song, "There's Music in the Air," followed, and yet another, both in fair time and tune.

"I'm going to find out whom those leading voices belong to," Grace said. "Light the lamps, won't you?" Then she stepped from the arbor, and said: —

"Thank you very much, gentlemen, but my husband and I are real selfish people, so we won't be satisfied until you come into the house and sing us all the army songs you know."

Two or three veterans started to run, but they were stopped by others. Grace heard them protesting that they were not of the singers, so she hurried out and declared that she would forego the anticipated pleasure rather than break up their own party; so within a moment or two the entire Post, with One-Arm Ojam, were in the parlor, where some stared about in

amazement, while others looked as distressed as cats in a strange kitchen. But host and hostess pressed most of them into seats, and Caleb stood guard at the door, having first whispered to Grace: —

"The pianner'll hold 'em — but don't play "Marchin' through Georgy,' please; we take pains not to worry One-Arm Ojam."

Grace whispered to Philip, who left the room; then she seated herself at the piano and rattled off "Dixie" with fine spirit. Soon she stopped, looked about inquiringly, and asked: —

"Can't any of you sing it? Now!"

Again she attacked the piano. Some one started the song, darkey-fashion, by singing one bar, the others joining vociferously in the second; this was repeated, and then all gave the chorus, and so the song went on so long as any one could recall words. This was followed, at a venture, by "Maryland, my Maryland," for which the Union veterans had one set of words, and Ojam another, although the general effect was good. The ice was now broken, and the men suggested one song after another, for most of which Grace discovered that she knew the

airs — for while the war created many new songs, it inspired little new music.

The singing continued until the guests became hoarse, by which time Philip entered with iced lemonade made with tea, and Grace followed with sandwiches and biscuits and cake, which prompted some of the men to tell what they did not have to eat in the army. From this to war-stories was but a short step, and as every veteran, however stupid, has at least one war-story that is all his own, the host and hostess enjoyed a long entertainment of a kind entirely new to them. Meanwhile Grace was pressing refreshments on the men individually, but suddenly she departed. When she returned, in a few moments, she bore a tray covered with saucers of ice-cream, and the astonishment which the contents produced, as it reached the palates of the guests, made Grace almost apoplectic in her endeavors to keep from laughing.

"What is it?" whispered a veteran who had not yet been served to one who was ecstatically licking his spoon.

"Dog my cats if I know!" was the reply, as the man took another mouthful. "It tastes

somethin' like puddin' — an' custard — an' cake — an' like the smell of ol' Mis' Madden's vanilla bean, — an' — " but just then the questioner was given an opportunity to taste for himself, after which he said: —

"It beats the smell o' my darter's hair-ile — beats it all holler."

"I reckon," said Caleb, who had inspected the freezer on its arrival, and had been wildly curious as to its product, "I reckon it's ice-cream."

"What? That stuff that there's jokes about in the newspapers sometimes, — jokes about gals that's too thin-waisted to hug, but can eat barl's of it?"

"Yes; that's the stuff."

"The dickens! Well, ef I was a gal, I'd let out tucks all day long an' durn the expense, if my feller'd fill my bread-basket with stuff like that. Must be frightful costly, though."

"Not more'n plain custard, Mis' Somerton says."

"Wh-a-a-a-a-at? Say, Caleb, I'm goin' to j'in the church, right straight off. No more

takin' any risks o' hell for me, thank you, for it stands to reason that they can't make ice-cream down there."

When the contents of the freezer were exhausted, Philip, who never smoked, opened a box of fine cigars which he had ordered from the East, with a view to business with visiting lawyers in the approaching "Court-week." Then the joy of the veterans was complete; the windows were opened, for, as Caleb said, no mosquito would venture into such a cloud, and it was not until midnight that any one thought to ask the time.

"I'm afeared," said Caleb, after all the other guests had departed, "that you'll have a mighty big job o' dish-washin' to-morrow, but — "

"But 'twas richly worth it," Grace said, and Philip assented.

"That's very kind o' you, but 'tain't what I was goin' to say, which was that I'll turn in and help, if you'll let me, an' another thing is, you've put an end to any chance of any of the boys takin' a drink of anythin' stronger than water to-night, an' you've made sure of some new customers, too."

"Oh, Caleb!" Grace said, "can't we do anything hearty for its own sake, without being rewarded for it?"

"Nary thing!" Caleb replied. "That's business truth, an' Gospel truth, too."

XVII — FOREIGN INVASION

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"*WELL*, Caleb," said Philip, on the day after Decoration Day, "how did the bath-house opening-day pan out?"

"First-rate — A 1," Caleb replied, rubbing his hands, and then laughing to himself a long time, although in a manner which implied that the excitement to laughter was of a confidential nature. But this merely piqued curiosity, so Philip said: —

"Do you think it fair to keep all the fun to yourself, you selfish scamp? Don't you know that things to laugh at are dismally scarce at this season of the year? As the boys say when another boy finds something, 'Halves.'"

"Well," said Caleb, "the fact is, some of the customers was scared to death, Black Sam says, for fear they'd catch cold after the bath. I'd

expected as much of some of our G. A. R. boys, — mentionin' no names, — so I'd took down to the house a dozen sets o' thin underclothin' that I'd ordered on suspicion. I always wear it — I learned the trick from one of our hospital doctors in the army, an' it gives me so much comfort that I talked it up to other men, but 'twas a new idee 'round here, an' ev'rybody laughed at me. The baths, though, scared a lot o' the boys into tryin' it. All day long they were kind o' wonderin', out loud, whether it was the cleanin' up or the underclothes that made 'em feel so much better'n usual; so I says to 'em, 'What's the matter with both? No one thing's ev'rythin', unless mebbe it's religion, an' even that loses its holt if you squat down with it an' don't do nothin' else.' 'But,' says some of 'em, 'what's to be did when the underclothes gets dirty?' 'Put on some clean ones,' says I, 'or wash the old ones overnight, 'fore you go to bed — that's what I done ev'ry night, when I was so poor that I couldn't afford a change.' Well, some of 'em'll do it, 'cause they're too poor to buy, but you'd better telegraph for a stock o' them thin

goods; for when they don't find thick shirts an' pants stickin' to 'em all day, while they're at work, they'll be so glad o' the change that they'll want to stock up. They'll find out, as I've always b'lieved, that underclothes, an' plenty of 'em, is a means o' grace."

"More business for the store, as usual," said Philip.

"Yes," said Caleb, "but 'twon't be a patch to the run there'd be on ice-cream machines — if there was plenty of ice to be had. Some o' the boys from the farmin' district stopped with me last night, thinkin' it was better to get some sleep 'fore sun-up than go out home an' wake their folks up halfway between midnight and daylight, to say nothin' o' scarin' all the dogs o' the county into barkin', and tirin' out hosses that's got a day's work before 'em. Well, 'fore turnin' in, they said lots o' nice things — though no nicer than they ought — about the way they had been treated at your house, an' 'bout the way you both acted, as if you an' them had been cut from the same piece, but — "

"Don't make me conceited, Caleb."

"I won't; for, as I was goin' to say, they

come back ev'ry time to the friz milk, as they called it, an' how they wished their wives knew how to make it, an' what a pity 'twas there wa'n't ice-houses all over the county. Well — partly with an eye to business, knowin' that most any of 'em could stand the price of a freezer, an' the others could do it, too, if they'd save the price o' liquor they drink in a month or two — I says: —

"'Well, why don't you make 'em? You could do it o' slabs you could split out o' logs from your own woodland, an' the crick freezes ev'ry winter, when you an' your hosses has got next to nothin' to do. Besides havin' ice-cream from milk that you've all got more of than you know what to do with, you could kill a critter once in a while in the summer, an' keep the meat cool; you could have fresh meat off an' on, instead o' cookin' pork seven days o' the week in hot weather, when it sickens the women an' children to look at it.' They 'lowed that that was so, an' they jawed it over for a while, an' — well, three or four ice-houses are goin' up, between farms, next winter, an' we'll sell some freezers, an' some men'll let up on drinkin'; for

the worst bum o' the lot 'lowed that he'd trade his thirsty any time, an' throw in a quart o' Bustpodder's best to boot, for a good square fill o' friz milk."

"So even ice-cream is a means of grace, Caleb — eh?" said Philip.

"That's what it is, an' I notice, too, that you don't laugh under your mustache, like you used to do, when mention's made o' means o' grace."

But what rose is without its thorn? In the course of a few days the word went about, among the very large class to whom everything is fuel for the flame of gossip, that a lot of the Grand Army men had been taken into the Somerton house, and found it a palace, the things in which must have cost thousands of dollars, and that it was a shame and an outrage that money should have been made out of the poor, overworked country people to support two young stuck-ups from the city in more luxury that Queen Elizabeth ever dreamed of; for who ever read in history books of Queen Elizabeth having ice-cream? and didn't the history books say that

she had only rushes on her floors, instead of even a rag carpet, to say nothing of picture carpets like the Somertons'?

When the rumor reached the store, Philip ground his teeth, but Grace laughed.

"I believe you'd laugh, even if they called your husband a swindler," said Philip.

"Indeed I would, at anything so supremely ridiculous," Grace said. "Wouldn't you, Caleb?"

"I reckon I would. Anyhow, it sounds a mighty sight better than the noise Philip made; besides, it's healthier for the teeth. It shows 'em off better, too."

"Now, Mr. Crosspatch, how do you feel?"

"Utterly crushed. But what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to make those gossips ashamed of themselves."

"How?"

"By refurnishing the parlor for the summer. The dust is ruining our nice things, so the change will be an economy. I'll do it so cheaply that almost any farmer in the county can afford to copy it, to the great

delight of his wife, as well as himself. Let — me — see — " and Grace dropped her head over a bit of paper and a pencil, and Caleb looked at her admiringly, and winked profoundly at Philip, and then hurried into the back room so that his impending substitute for an ecstatic dance should not disturb the planner of the coming parlor decorations.

For some reason — perhaps excitement over the bath-house, or surprise at the uniforming of his Grand Army command, or the heat, or the debilitating effect of old wounds — Philip pretended to believe it was the effect of Grace's ice-cream upon a system not inured to such compounds — Caleb suddenly became disabled by a severe malarial attack with several complications. He did not take to his bed, but his movements were mechanical, his manner apathetic, and his tongue almost silent. He did not complain; and when questioned, he insisted that he suffered no pain. Philip and Grace endeavored to tempt his appetite, for he ate scarcely anything, and they tried to rally him by various mental means, but without effect. He noted their solicitude, and

its sincerity impressed him so deeply that he said one day: —

"The worst thing about this attack is that I can't get words to tell you how good you both are bein' to me. But I'm the same as a man that's been hit with a club."

Then Philip and Grace insisted that Doctor Taggess should do something for Caleb, and the Doctor said nothing would give him more pleasure; for anything that would restore Caleb to health would probably be serviceable in other cases of the same kind, of which there were several on his hands. After listening to much well-meant but worthless suggestion, the Doctor said: —

"There's a new treatment of which I've heard encouraging reports, but it is quite costly. It is called the sea treatment. It is said, on good authority, that a month at sea, anywhere in the temperate zone, will cure any chronic case of malaria, and that the greater the attack of sea-sickness, the more thorough will be the cure."

"Caleb shall try it, no matter what the cost," said Philip.

The Doctor smiled, shook his head doubtfully, and said: —

"What if he won't? He is so bound up in you and your business, and his own many interests and duties, that he will make excuses innumerable."

"Quite likely, but I ought to be ingenious enough to devise some way of making it appear a matter of duty."

"I hope you can, and that you'll begin at once, if only for my sake, professionally, so that I may study the results."

Then, for a day, Philip became almost as silent as Caleb, and Grace assisted him. The next morning, he said: —

"Caleb, I want to start a new enterprise that will revolutionize this part of the country and part of Europe, too, if it succeeds, but it won't work unless you join me in it."

"You know I'm yours to command," Caleb replied, at the same time forcing a tiny gleam of interest.

"That's kind of you, but this project of mine is so unusual that I almost fear to suggest it. You know that the farmers of

this section plant far more corn than anything else."

"Yes, 'n always will, I reckon, no matter how small the price of what they can't put into pork. The idee o' corn-plantin' 's been with 'em so long that I reckon it's 'petrified in their brain structure,' as a scientific sharp I once read about, said about somethin' else."

"Quite so, and we can't hope to change it unless labor and horses should suddenly become cheaper and more plentiful. Now I propose that we take advantage of this state of affairs by making some money and getting some glory, besides indirectly helping the farmers, by increasing the future demand for corn. You yourself once told me that if the people of Europe could learn to eat corn-bread, 'twould be money in their own pockets, relieve corn-bins here of surplus stock, and perhaps lessen the quantity of the corn spoiled by being made into whiskey."

"That's a fact," said Caleb.

"Very well. Corn never was cheaper here than it is now, — so I'm told, — nor were the mills ever so idle. I can buy the best of corn-meal,

barrelled, and deliver it in London or Liverpool, freight paid, at less than two dollars per barrel, and I can buy all I want of it on my note at six months. If you'll go into the enterprise with me, every barrel shall be labelled 'Claybanks Western Corn-Flour: trademark registered by Philip Somerton.'"

"Hooray for Claybanks! Hooray for the West!" shouted Caleb, becoming more like his old self.

"Thank you. But as I've quoted to you about your bath-house project, 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.' Meal has often been sent to the English market, and some dealers have even sent careful cooking and bread-making directions. The different methods of making good food from corn-meal must, I am satisfied, be shown, practically, before the eyes of possible consumers. So my plan is this: to send over, say, two hundred barrels to London; hire for a month a small shop in a district thickly inhabited by people who know the value of a penny saved, cook in various forms — hasty pudding, hoe-cake, dodgers, muffins, corn-

bread, etc., at the rate of a barrel of meal a day, or as much as can be sold, or even given away as an advertisement of the 'Claybanks Western Corn-Flour' — meanwhile persuading grocers in the vicinity to keep the meal for sale to persons who are sensible enough to appreciate it. And finally, as you know how to make all sorts of good things of corn-meal, I'd like you to go over to England and manage the entire business."

"Wh-e-e-e-e-e-ew!"

"That's somewhat non-committal, isn't it?"

"Well!" said Caleb, "I reckon the malary's knocked plumb out o' me!"

"I hope so; but if it isn't, it will be; for Doctor Taggess says that a month at sea is the newest treatment prescribed for malaria, and that is said to be a sure cure. The trip over won't take a month, but a week or ten days of the ocean ought to make a beginning, and show you how 'twill act, and if the enterprise makes a hit, I'll show my appreciation by standing the expense of a trip up the Mediterranean and back by direct steamer to the United States. By the way, while you're up

the Mediterranean, you might join one of Cook's tourist parties, and see the Holy Land. How does the entire plan strike you?"

"How — does it — strike me?" drawled Caleb. Then he pulled himself together and continued: "Why, it's struck me all of a heap. Say, Philip, you've got a mighty long head — do you know it? I ain't sayin' that I can't do the work middlin' well, though I have heard that it takes a pickaxe an' a corkscrew to get any new idee into the commoner kinds of the English skull. An' a trip through the Holy Land! But say — who'd look after my Sunday-school class while I was away?"

"Oh, I will, if you can't find a better substitute. You've been doing your best to get me into church work — you know you have, you sly scamp. Now's your chance."

"To break you into that sort o' work," said Caleb, slowly, "I'd be willin' to peddle ice in Greenland, an' live on the proceeds. But there's my other class — though I s'pose I could farm that out for a spell. Then there's a lot o' folks that's been lookin' to me for one thing an' another so long that —"

"That perhaps 'twould do them good to be obliged to depend upon themselves for a few weeks."

"Phil dear, don't be heartless! Caleb, couldn't you trust those people to a woman for a little while?"

"Oh, couldn't I! An' I thank you from the bottom of my heart besides. London! Then I could see Westminster Abbey, an' the Tower o' London, an' go to John Wesley's birthplace, an' —"

"Yes," said Philip, "and you could run over to Paris, too."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Caleb. "When I want to see Satan an' his kingdom, I won't have to travel three thousan' mile to do it. But —"

"But me no more buts, Caleb — unless you would rather not go."

"Rather not, indeed! If I was dyin' as hard of malary as I'm dyin' to see some things in England, I guess I'd turn up in kingdom-come in about three days, almanac-time. What I was 'buttin'' about was only this: are you plumb sure that I'm the right man for the job?"

"Quite sure; for you're entirely honest, industrious, and persistent; you're as corn-crazy as any other Western man; you've taught my wife and me how to work a lot of unsuspected delicacies out of corn-meal; and, more important than all else, for this purpose, you've the special Western faculty of taking a man's measure at once and treating him accordingly. If that won't work with the English, — and the worst of them can't be any stupider than certain people here, — nothing will. So the matter is settled, and you're to start at once — to-morrow, if possible; for first I want you to buy me a lot of goods in New York. My wife and I have determined to carry a larger stock and more variety, and — "

"Start to-morrow!" interrupted Caleb, incredulously.

"Yes; the longer you wait, the longer 'twill take you to get away. Besides, I want to keep the corn-meal enterprise a secret, and you're so honest that it'll leak from you if you don't get off at once."

"But I can't get — "

"Yes, you can, no matter what it is. And

while you are attending to business in New York you must sleep down by the seaside, so that the sea air shall begin its fight with the malaria as soon as possible. I shall engage a room for you by telegraph to-day; you can reach it by rail within an hour from any part of the city, and return in the morning as early as you like."

"But, man alive, you haven't got the corn-meal yet."

"I shall have a lot of it on the rail by a week from to-day; the rest can follow. You'll need a fortnight in New York, to do the buying and see the sights, for the town is somewhat larger than Claybanks. Besides, no self-respecting American should go abroad until he has seen Niagara Falls, Independence Hall, Bunker Hill Monument, and the National Capital. The Falls are directly on your route East, Washington is a short and cheap trip from New York, with Philadelphia between the two cities, and you can take a steamer from Boston. Now pack your gripsack at once — there's a good fellow, and don't say a single good-by. I'm told they're dreadfully unlucky. After you've

started, I'll explain to every one that you've gone East to buy some goods for me. At present I'll settle down to making you a route-book, with information about all sorts of things that you may wish, after you're off, that you'd asked about."

Caleb retired slowly to his room over the store; Philip and Grace took turns for an hour in watching the street for Doctor Taggess and in sending messengers in every direction for him, and when the Doctor arrived, they unfolded to him, under injunctions of secrecy, the entire plan regarding Caleb. The Doctor listened with animated face and twinkling eyes, until the story ended; then he relieved himself of a long, hearty laugh, and said: —

"What would your Uncle Jethro say to such an outlay of money?"

"If he's where I hope he is," Philip replied, "he knows that Caleb richly deserves it in addition to his salary, for his many years of service. Besides, we've earned the money, in excess of any previous half-year of trade; so even if the commercial project fails

I shall be out only three or four hundred dollars."

"And without doubt," said the Doctor, "'twill be the remaking of Caleb."

"I hope so," Philip replied, "for he has been remaking me."

XVIII — THE TABBY PARTY

ALL of Grace's spare hours for a fortnight after Caleb's departure were spent in recalling and applying the makeshift furniture devices of her native village and those described in back numbers of "Ladies' Own" papers and magazines, as well as all the upholstery and other decorative methods of her sister-saleswomen in the days when she and they had far more taste than money. Chairs and lounges were extemporized from old boxes and barrels, cushioned with straw or corn-husks, and covered with chintz. A roll of cheap matting, ordered from the city, drove the rugs from the sitting room and parlor, and the cheapest of hangings replaced the lace curtains at the windows. All of the framed pictures were sent upstairs, and upon the walls were affixed, with furniture tacks, many borderless pictures, plain and colored, from the collection

which Philip and Grace had made, in past years, from weekly papers and Christmas "Supplements."

The vases, too, disappeared, though substitutes for them were found. Dainty tables, brackets, etc., were replaced by some made from fragments of boxes, the completed structures being stained to imitate more costly woods, and instead of the couple's darling bric-à-brac appeared oddities peculiar to the country — some birds and small animals stuffed by Black Sam, birds'-nests, dried flowers, a mass of heads of wheat, oats, rye, and sorghum arranged as a great bouquet, some turkey-tail fans, and so many other things that had attracted Grace in her drives and walks that there seemed no room on mantel, tables, and walls for all of them.

"There!" Grace exclaimed, as she ushered her husband into the parlor at the end of a day expended on finishing touches. "What do you think of it?"

"Bless me!" Philip exclaimed. "Absolutely harmonious in color, besides being far fuller than it was before. 'Tis quite as pretty, too, in

general effect. Don't imagine for a moment, however, that your selected list of old cats will appreciate it."

"I *shall* imagine it, and I don't believe I shall be disappointed. All human nature is susceptible to general effect. Besides, Mrs. Taggess is to be here, and all of them are fond of her, and she will say many things that I can't. I shall boast only when they tell me that they suppose my husband did most of the work — if any of them are clever enough to detect the difference between what is here and what the G. A. R. men and other guests have reported."

The invitations were given informally, though long in advance, to a midday dinner on the first day of "Court-week," — a day set apart by common consent in hundreds of counties, for a general flocking to town. The guests selected were — according to Caleb, who was consulted when the plan was first formed — the ten most virulent feminine gossips in the county. Black Sam's wife had been employed to assist for the day at cooking and serving, and among the dishes were many which would be entirely new to the guests. At one end of the table sat

Grace, "dressed," as one of the guests said afterwards, "as all-fired as a gal that was expectin' her feller, an' was boun' to make him pop the question right straight off." At the other end of the table was Mrs. Taggess, plainly attired, except for her habitual smile, and at either side sat five as differing shapes — except for sharp features and inquiring eyes — as could be found anywhere. One wore black silk with much affectation of superiority to the general herd, but the others seemed to have prepared for a wild competition in colors of raiment and ribbons, and one had succeeded in borrowing for the day the original and many-colored silk of Mrs. Hawk Howlaway, described in an early chapter of this narrative.

The guests did full justice to the repast. One by one they became mystified by the number of courses, for they had expected pie or pudding to follow the first dish. Some began to be apprehensive of the future, but with the fine determination characteristic of "settlers," good and bad alike, they continued to ply knife and fork and spoon. For some time the efforts of the hostess and Mrs. Taggess to encourage con-

versation were unrewarded, though some of the guests exchanged questions and comments in guarded tones. All acted with the apparent unconcern of the North American Indian; but curiosity, a tricky quality at best, suddenly compelled one gaunt woman to exclaim, as she contemplated the dish before her and raised it to her prominent nose: —

"What on airth is that stuff, I'd like to know?"

"That is lobster salad," Grace replied.

"Oh! I couldn't somehow make out what kind of an animile the meat come off of."

"Nuther could I," said her vis-à-vis, with a full mouth, "but I'm goin' to worry my ole man to raise some of 'em on the farm, for it's powerful good, an' no mistake."

A buzz of assent went round the table; the ice was broken, so another guest said: —

"Mis' Somerton, I've been dyin' to know what that there soup was made of that we begun on. I never tasted anythin' so good in all my born days."

"Indeed? I'm very glad you liked it. 'Twas made of crawfish."

A score of knives and forks clattered upon plates, and ten women assumed attitudes of amazement and consternation. Finally one of them succeeded in gasping: —

"Them little things that bores holes 'longside the crick? the things that boys makes fish-bait of?"

"The same, though only millionnaires' sons could afford to use them for bait in the East. Crawfish meat in New York costs as much as — oh, a single pound of it costs as much as a big sugar-cured ham. I never dreamed of buying it — I never dared hope that I might taste it — until I came out here."

The appearance of a new course checked conversation on the subject, but one of the guests eyed suspiciously a tiny French chop, the tip of its bone covered with paper, and said to the woman at her right: —

"Don't appear to know what we're bein' fed with here. Wonder what this is? It's little enough to be a side bone o' cat. Must be all right, though; Mis' Taggess is eatin' hern."

A form of blanc-mange was another mystery. Said one woman to another: —

"It must be the ice-cream the soldiers told about, for it's powerful cold, besides bein' powerful good."

"That's so," was the reply; "but 'pears to me I didn't hear the men say nothin' about there bein' gravy poured on theirn."

Some of the guests were becoming full to their extreme capacity, — a condition which stimulates geniality in some natures, ugliness in others. They had come to criticise — to learn of their hostess's extravagance. They had remained in the parlor only long enough to be entirely overcome by its magnificence and to exchange whispered remarks about the shameful waste of money wrung from the hard-working farmers.

The dinner had been good beyond their wildest expectations; not the best Fourth of July picnic refreshments, or even the memorable dinner given by Squire Burress, the richest farmer in the county, when his daughter was married, compared with it. What was so good must also have been very expensive. Criticism must begin with something, and the blanc-mange seemed a proper

subject to one woman, who was reputed to be very religious. So she groaned: —

"This — whatever it is — is so awful good that it must ha' been sinful costly — actually sinful."

"Yes, indeed," sighed another. "One might say, a wicked waste o' money."

"Blanc-mange? — costly?" Grace said, curbing an indignant impulse; "why, 'tis nothing but corn-starch, milk, sugar, and a little flavoring. I wonder what dessert dish could be cheaper!"

"You don't say!" exclaimed a woman less malevolent or more practical than the others. "Now, I just ain't a-goin' to give you no peace till you give me the receipt for it."

"I'll give it, with pleasure; or better still, you shall have a package of the corn-starch, — 'tis worth only a few cents, — with full directions on the label. I might possibly forget some part of them, you know."

"Me too," said several women as one, and criticism was temporarily abated. Before a new excuse for reviving it could be found, the ice-cream — the real article, and without gravy,

of course — made its appearance. It was consumed in silence, in as much haste as possible with anything so cold, and also with evident enjoyment. Then the opponent of sinful extravagance remarked: —

"It's awful good — too good! It 'pears wicked to enjoy any earthly thing so much. Besides, you needn't tell me that *it* ain't awful costly, 'cause I shan't believe it."

"If my word is of so doubtful quality," said Grace, with rising color, "perhaps Mrs. Taggess, with whom you're better acquainted, will inform you."

"'Tis nothing but milk, cream, and sugar," said Mrs. Taggess, who had borrowed Grace's freezer and experimented with it, "and most of you know very well that you've so much milk that you feed some of it to your pigs. The cream in what all of you have eaten would make, perhaps, a single pound of butter, which you would be glad to sell for fifteen cents. The sugar cost not more than five or six cents, and the flavoring, to any one with raspberries in their own garden, would have cost nothing."

The guests gasped in chorus, but the tormentor quickly said: —

"But the ice! Us poor farmin' folks can't afford ice; it's only them that makes their livin' out of us — "

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Taggess, "but many of the farmers, your husband among them, have been telling Doctor Taggess recently that they were going to put up ice-houses next winter, and that they were foolish or lazy for not having already done so before. I'm sure that all of you who have enjoyed the cream so greatly will keep your husbands in mind of it, especially as ice-cream, made at home, is as cheap as the poorest food that any farmer's family eats."

The coming of the coffee caused conversation to abate once more, for in each cup floated a puff of whipped cream — a spectacle unfamiliar to any of the gossips, some of whom hastily spooned and swallowed it, in the supposition that it was ice-cream, put in to cool the coffee somewhat. Those who followed the motions of their hostess and Mrs. Taggess stirred the whipped cream into

the coffee, and enjoyed the result, but again the voice of the tormentor arose: —

"We buy all our coffee at your store, but we don't never have none that tastes like this here."

"Indeed?" Grace said, with an air of solicitude. "I wonder why, for there is but one kind in the store, and this was made from it. Perhaps we prepare it in different ways."

"I bile mine a plumb half-hour," said the tormentor, "so's to git ev'ry mite o' stren'th out o' it."

"Oh! I never boil mine."

She never boiled coffee! Would the wonders of this house and its housekeeper never cease?

"For pity sakes, how does any one make coffee without boilin', *I'd* like to know?" said a little woman with a thin, aquiline nose and a piercing voice.

"I used to do it," said Grace, "by putting finely ground coffee in a strainer, and letting boiling water trickle through it, but the strainer melted off one day, through my carelessness, so now I put the coffee in a cotton

bag, tie it, throw it into the pot, pour on boiling water, set it on the cooler part of the stove, and let it stand without boiling for five minutes. Then I take out the bag and its contents, to keep the coffee from getting a woody taste. My husband, who often makes the coffee in the morning, throws the ground coffee into cold water, lets it stand on the stove until it comes to a boil, and removes it at once. I'm not yet sure which way is the best."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Taggess, "although I've tasted it here made in both ways, and seen it made, too."

The guests were so astonished that each took a second cup — not that they really wanted it, as one explained to two others, but to see whether it really was as good as it had seemed at first. Then Grace arose, and led the way to the parlor. Some of the guests were loath to follow, among them the tormentor, who said: —

"I s'pose if I'd talked about these crockery dishes, she'd have faced me down, an' tried to make me believe they didn't cost as much as mine."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't," said Mrs. Taggess, who overheard the remark; "but I think 'twas very kind of her to set out her very best china, don't you? Most people do that only for their dearest friends — never for people who forget the manners due to the woman of the house, whoever she may be."

"I don't see what you mean by that, Mis' Taggess, I'm sure. I only — "

"Ah, well, try not to 'only' in the parlor, for Mrs. Somerton is trying very hard to make us feel entirely at home."

"Well, *I* think she's just tryin' to show off, 'cause she's come into old Jethro's money."

"Show off with what? Do tell me."

"Why, with her fine furniture an' fixin's. If that best room o' hern was mine, I'd be 'feared to use it, an' I'd expect the house to be struck by lightnin' to punish me for my wicked pride."

"I'm a-dyin' to ask her what some o' them things cost," said another, "but I don't quite dass to."

"Then you may stop dying at once, for I'll ask her for you, although I already know,

within a few cents, the price of everything in the room. Come along, now. Ahem! Mrs. Somerton, there's much curiosity among the ladies as to the cost of furnishing your beautiful parlor. Won't you tell us?"

"Very gladly," Grace said, "for I'm very proud of it."

"Didn't I tell you?" whispered the tormentor.

"Everything in the parlor, except the piano, which is the ugliest thing in it," Grace continued, "cost less than twenty dollars."

"Sho!" exclaimed one woman, incredulously. "Why, that's no more money than Squire Burress paid for the sofy that his gals is courted on, for Mis' Burress told me the price o' that sofy herself, an' showed me the bill to prove it."

"I've no bills to show," Grace said, with a laugh, "for the largest articles are made of scraps, such as my husband gives away to any one who asks for them. See here—" as she spoke she turned a chair upside down to show that its basis was a barrel. Then she raised the drapery of a divan to show the unpainted

boxes beneath. "The matting on the floor is three times as cheap as rag carpet. You can buy the window hangings in the store at fifteen cents a yard — though don't imagine I'm trying to advertise the goods. All the furniture covers are of cheap bedquilt chintzes. Examine everything, ladies; for, as I've already said, I'm very proud of my cheap little parlor."

"You didn't say nothin' about the cost of the labor," said the tormentor.

"True," Grace admitted, "but I can reckon it with very little trouble, for I did it all myself; I've no grown sons and daughters, like some of you, so I did it alone. Besides my time it cost me — well, to be exact, one thumb bruised with the hammer; one finger ditto; a bad scratch on one hand, caused by a saw slipping; half a day of pain in one eye, into which I blew some sawdust; two sore knees, got while putting down the matting; and one twisted ankle — I accidentally stepped from a box while tacking a picture to the wall."

"Well, I'm clean beat out o' my senses!" confessed one guest. "I never heerd tell

that they learned such work to women in cities."

"Perhaps they don't," Grace said, "but I learned most of it when I was a country girl in western New York."

"What? You a country gal?"

"Indeed I am. I can milk cows, churn butter, make garden, take care of chickens, saw wood and split it, wash clothes, and do any other country housework, besides making my own clothes."

The woman who had elicited this information looked slowly from face to face among her acquaintances, and then said:—

"I reckon we're a passel o' fools."

"Oh,—excuse me; but I assure you that I meant nothing of the kind."

"But I do, an' I mean it strong, too; yes, ma'am. We're a passel o' fools. I won't feel over an' above safe until I git home an' take a good long think, an' I reckon the sooner the rest of us go too, the seldomer we'll put our foot in it."

There was general acquiescence in this suggestion; even the tormentor seemed suppressed,

but suddenly her eyes glared, her lips hardened, and she said: —

"I suppose that scrumptious dress o' yourn was made o' scraps, too?"

Grace laughed merrily, and replied: —

"You're not far from right, for 'tis made of old Madras window curtains that cost eight cents a yard when new. There wasn't enough of the stuff to cover all my windows here, so I made it up into a dress rather than waste it, for I liked the pattern of it very much. Oh, yes — and there's sixteen cents' worth of ribbon worked into it — I'd forgotten that. But *your* dress — oh, I shouldn't dare wear one so costly as a black silk. Really, I should think it a sinful waste of money that might do so much good to the poor, or to the Missionary Society, or the Bible Society, or — "

"What time's it gittin' to be?" asked the tormentor. "I'll bet my husban' is jest rarin' 'roun' like a bob-tail steer in fly-time, an' tellin' all the other men that women never know when it's time to go home, an' what a long drive he's got before him, an' all the stock to water when he gits thar. Good-by, Mis' Somerton. Some

day I'll borrer that ice-cream machine o' yourn, an' a hunk o' ice, if you don't mind."

The other women also took their leave, and soon Grace was alone with Mrs. Taggess, who said: —

"I'd apologize for them, my dear, if you hadn't known in advance that they were the most malicious lot in the county."

Grace laughed, and replied: —

"But weren't they lots of fun?" Mrs. Taggess embraced her hostess, and said: —

"I believe you'd find something to laugh at even in a cyclone."

"If not," Grace replied, "'twouldn't be for lack of trying."

XIX—DAYS IN THE STORE

CALEB'S departure was effected without publicity, no one having known of its probability but the Somertons and Pastor Grateway, whom Caleb had asked to provide a temporary substitute to lead his weekly "class-meetin'." The substitute, however, made haste to tell of his new dignity, so within twenty-four hours the entire town knew that Caleb had gone to New York, and great was the wonder; for from the date of the foundation of the town no Claybanker had been known to go to New York intentionally, although it was reported that an occasional native had reached the metropolis in the course of a desultory journey to the bad.

Philip felt quite competent to manage the business without assistance, early summer being, like spring, a period of business inactivity; but within a week he was mystified by the appear-

ance of many people who had never before entered the store, but who now evinced not only a willingness but a strong desire to become customers. Referring to a full list which Caleb had prepared months before, but which until now had lain unnoticed in the desk, — a list of adults throughout the county, — Philip found opposite the names of the visitors some comments not entirely uncomplimentary; among them, "Tricky"; "Shaky"; "Never believe him"; "Don't sell to her without written order from her dad"; "Thief"; "Require his note, with good endorsement — he can get it"; "Her husband's published notice against trusting her"; etc. The incursion increased in volume as time went on, and compelled Philip to say to Grace, at the end of the seventh day: —

"I didn't suppose there could be so many undesirable people in a single fairly respectable and small county. They've evidently thought me 'an easy mark,' as the city boys say, if I could be found away from Caleb's sheltering wing, but not one of them has succeeded in getting the better of me. Men talk of the tact

needed in avoiding the plausible scamps who invade business circles in the city, but after this week's experience I think I could pass inspection for a city detective's position."

"If you had a list like Caleb's to refer to, so that you might know what to expect of every one you met," Grace added, with a roguish twinkle in her eyes, for which the eyes themselves were obscured a moment, after which infliction Philip continued: —

"I really wish that an important trade or two, of almost any kind, would turn up, for me to manage without assistance; not that I underrate Caleb's value, but I should like to demonstrate that besides having been an apt pupil, I've at least a little ability that is wholly and peculiarly mine. Then I should like to write Caleb about it; the honest chap would be quite as pleased as I at any success I might report, and he would feel less uneasy at being away."

Within an hour or two, a native whom Philip knew by sight and name, although not one of his own customers, shuffled into the store, and asked: —

"Don't know nobody that wants to trade goods for forty acre o' black wannut land, I s'pose?"

"Black walnut timber? How old?"

"Well, the best way to find out's to look at it for yourself."

"Whereabouts is it? I may take a look at it when I get a chance."

"'Tain't more'n two mile off. What's to keep ye from gittin' on yer hoss now an' ridin' out with me? We can git there an' back in an hour."

"Do it, Phil," Grace whispered. "The horse needs exercise, and so do you. I can hold the fort for an hour."

"The land's too fur from my place," explained the farmer, as the two men rode along at an easy canter, "an' I can't keep track o' the lumber market, to know when to cut an' ship wannut lawgs, but 'tain't that way with you."

"How much do you want for it?"

"Well, I reckon five dollar an acre won't hurt ye — five dollars in goods. I've been a holdin' it a long time, 'cause wannut land is

wuth more'n more ev'ry year; but my folks wants an awful lot o' stuff, an' my boys want me to lay in a lot o' new farmin' tools, an' make an' addition to the barn, an' I kind o' ciphered up what ev'rythin' wanted, all told, would cost, an' I made out 'twould be nigh onto two hundred dollars, an' I sez to myself, sez I, 'By gum, I'll sell the wannut lot; that's what I'll do.' It's all free an' clear — I've got the deed in my pocket, an' 'twon't take ye ten minutes at the County Clerk's office to find that there's no mortgages on it. Whoa! There! Did ye ever see finer wannut land'n that? Let's ride up an' down through it. I dunno any trees that grows that's as cherful to look at, from the money standp'int, as tall, thick black wannuts."

Philip was not an expert on standing timber, but it was plain to see that the ground over which he rode, to and fro, was well sprinkled with fine black walnut trees. It lay low enough to be subject to the annual overflow of the creek, not far away, but Philip was bargaining for timber — not for land. The two men continued to ride until the farmer said: —

"Here's my line — see the blaze on this tree? You can see t'other end o' the line way down yander, ef you skin yer eye — a big blazed hick'ry; or, we'll ride down to it."

"Never mind," said Philip. "I'll give you two hundred in goods as soon as you like."

"I thort you would," said the farmer. "Well, I'll bring in the papers, fully executed, to-morrer, an' I'll leave a list o' stuff that ye might lay out, to save time; my wife can do her sheer o' the tradin' when she comes in to-morrer. An' I'll assign ye my own deed, when we get back to town, so's ye can have the title examined to-day, ef ye like, an' put a stopper agin any new incumbrances, though I ain't the kind o' man to make 'em after passin' my word. 'A bargain's a bargain!' that's my motto."

When Philip returned to the store he found awaiting him a young man on horseback, whose face was unfamiliar. When the seller of the walnut land had departed, the young man said: —

"See anythin' wrong 'bout this hoss?"

After a hasty but close examination Philip admitted that he did not.

"Glad o' that," said the man, "'cause o' this." As he spoke he handed Philip a bit of paper on which was written, in Caleb's familiar chirography and over Caleb's signature:—

"Dear Jim: Anybody would be glad to give you seventy-five dollars in cash for your colt, but you're foolish to sell now. Keep him a year, and you'll get fifty more, but if you're bound to sell, please give Mr. Somerton first show.

"Yours truly,

"Caleb Wright."

"I suppose, from this, that you'd rather have seventy-five dollars than your colt?" Philip said, as he returned the letter.

"That's about the size of it; but if you ain't sharp-set for a healthy three-year-old, of the kind they hanker after up to the city, I reckon I can find somebody that is, seein' that Caleb's a good judge an' never overprices hosses when he thinks he's likely to do the buyin' of 'em."

"Come in," said Philip, who quickly made out a receipt for seventy-five dollars for one sorrel horse, aged three years, which the young man signed.

"James Marney," said Philip, reading the signature. "I thought I knew every name in the county, but—"

"But I come from the next county," said the young man. "Caleb'll be disappointed not to see me, but this young woman says he's gone East. What'll you gimme for the saddle an' bridle? I'm goin' to the city an' can't use 'em there."

The equipments named were in fair condition, so after some "dickering" Philip exchanged six dollars for them, and the young man sauntered off in the direction of Claybanks' single "saloon."

"'A fool and his money,'" quoted Philip to Grace; "but as he didn't heed Caleb's injunction, I don't suppose any word of mine would have had any effect. Mark my words: I'll clear twenty-five at least on that transaction within a week, for there's a city dealer here now to buy a string of young horses. That

forty acres of walnut trees is ours, too, and cheap enough to hold until winter, when labor will be cheap; then I'll have the trees cut and hauled to the creek, to be rafted out when the overflow comes."

Grace looked at her husband admiringly, contemplatively, exultantly, and said:—

"Who'd have thought it a year ago?"

"Thought what, ladybird?"

"Oh, that you would have blossomed into a keen-eyed, quick, successful trader."

"It does seem odd, doesn't it? There's more profit in to-day's transactions than my city salary for a month amounted to. Ah, well; live and learn. If you'll keep shop a few minutes longer, I'll put both horses into the barn and go up to the court-house and see if Weefer's title to the forty acres of walnut is clear."

In a few moments he returned with some papers in his hands and a countenance more than ordinarily cheerful, so that Grace said:—

"Apparently the title is good."

"Oh, yes; but here's something unexpected, and quite as gratifying,—a letter from Caleb.

I didn't imagine, till now, how glad I should be to hear from the dear old chap."

"Read it — aloud — at once!" Grace said, clapping her hands in joyous anticipation. "Where does he write from?"

"New York. H'm — here goes.

"'Dear Philip, Hoping you're both well, I write to say that I'm a good deal better, though Niagara nearly knocked me deaf, and New York's about finished the job. If we had water-power like Niagara at Claybanks, it would be the making of the town. I told Miss Truett that I thought the foam on the falls beat any lace in her store, and she thought so too.'"

"Oh, what fun she'll have with Caleb!" Grace exclaimed.

"Probably, as you think so; but who is she?"

"She's the head of one of the departments of the store I was in. I gave Caleb letters to her and some of the other people who would give him information, for my sake, about goods he was to buy for us. Mary Truett is the ablest business woman in the place, and besides, she's as good as gold;

not exactly pretty, but wonderfully charming, and as merry as a grig. She's a perfect witch; I'd give anything to see her demure face as she listens to Caleb, and then to hear her 'take him off' after he has gone. But do go on with the letter."

"Where was I? Oh — 'New York's noisier than Niagara, and all the noises don't play the same tune, either, but my second day here was Sunday, so I got broke in gradual, for which I hope I was truly grateful. I sampled the different kinds of churches, one of them being Miss Truett's.'"

"She's an Episcopalian," Grace said. "I wonder how Caleb got along with the service."

"Perhaps we can find out. He says: 'I don't know whether I stood up most, or sat down most, but I do know that I wouldn't have knowed when to do either if Miss Truett hadn't given me a powerful lot of nudges and coat-tail pulls, besides swapping books with me mighty lively while the minister was going forward and backward in them. I won't describe the service; for as

you and your wife belong to that sect, I guess you know more than I can tell you, but I will say that there was enough "amens" in it to show where us Methodists got the habit of shouting out in meeting; and though I can't make up my mind after only one try, as a lot of our customers said when your Uncle Jethro put on sale the first box of lump sugar that ever came to Claybanks, I reckon that it is a first-rate manner of worship for them that are used to it, seeing that John Wesley was in it, and you two, and Miss Truett, for she looked like a picture of an angel when she was reading and singing and praying.'"

"Poor Caleb!" Grace sighed. "He's like all the other men who have met Mary Truett."

"Does she flirt even in church?"

"She never flirts. Don't be horrid! Go on with the letter."

"H'm. 'New York is hotter than Claybanks' — rank heresy, Caleb — 'according to the thermometer, and the way the heat sizzles out of the sidewalks, and meanders up-

ward, ought to be a warning to hardened sinners, and there are plenty of them here. Why, I asked a policeman on Broadway where was a first-class eating-house, and he pointed to one that he said was the best in town, and I had fried ham, and they charged me seventy-five cents for it, though it wouldn't have weighed half a pound raw. I don't harbor bad feelings, but the owner of that eating-house had better shy clear of me on Judgment Day. Miss Truett says it was extortionate, and I wish he could have seen her eyes when she said it.'"

"I wish I too could have seen them, for they are superb," Grace said. "I must write her for a full report on Caleb. But I'm interrupting."

"'That seaside boarding-place you engaged for me,'" continued Philip from the letter, "'is knocking my malaria endwise, which it ought to, seeing the price of board that is tacked up on the door, but anyhow, I feel like a giant every morning when I start for the city; that is, I think I do, though I never was a giant to find out for sure. I

take a walk morning and evening, looking at the ocean, and trying to tell myself what I think of it, but not a word can I get hold of. Miss Truett says it's just so with her.' H'm — there's that woman again!"

"Bless her!"

"I shouldn't say so. I'm afraid Caleb has lost his head over her."

"He'll find it again. Any good man will be bettered by meeting her. Is there anything more about her?"

"Yes, and at once. Here it is: 'Miss Truett is all interest about your wife, and I like to get her going on the subject, for she thinks that Mrs. Somerton is everything that is nice and good and splendid; and when Miss Truett thinks anything, she knows how to say it in a style that beats any lawyer or preacher I ever heard. It ain't a pretty thing to say about a woman, maybe, but I mean only what's right when I say that when she talks it always seems to me that sometime or other she swallowed a big dictionary, colored pictures and all, and not a scrap of it disagreed with her. She says she wishes she had a job

just like Mrs. Somerton's, and I told her that there was only one way to get it, and that if ever I saw an unmarried Western merchant of about your age and general style, I'd give him her name and some pointed advice.

"'Most of the goods you wanted are bought and shipped, and when the corn-meal gets here I'll get out for England.

"'With hearty regards to Mrs. Somerton, I am

"'Yours always,

"'Caleb Wright.'"

"Oh, Mary Truett!" exclaimed Grace, when the reading ended. "What fun you've had!"

"As she seems to be the spirit of the letter," said Philip, "tell me something more about her."

"I don't know what more to say. I wasn't familiar with her, for she was a department head, and not of my department, but she had a way of saying kind and merry things to some girls in other parts of the store. She is about thirty; she has parents and brothers, and works merely because she is overflowing with energy, and has no taste for the trivialities

of mere society life. Yet her manners are charming, and genuine, too. 'Twas the fashion of the store to worship her, and no one ever tired of it."

"All this, yet unmarried at thirty? How did it happen?"

"I don't know. Perhaps 'twas because she never met you when you were a bachelor. It hasn't been for lack of admirers. Probably she is waiting for a man who is worthy of her. I know she saved many girls in her department and in some others from making foolish marriages, and I committed some of her warnings and arguments to memory — though I got them at second-hand — and I used them on other girls."

"I suppose we couldn't persuade her to come out here, to assist you in the store?"

"Scarcely. She is very well paid where she is. Besides, what would there be for her in other ways?"

"As much as there is for you, poor girl."

"Oh, no — for I have my husband."

"And you feel sure that she isn't trifling with Caleb?"

"The idea! If you could see them together — dear, poor Caleb, with his thin figure, ragged beard, tired face, and stooping pose — Mary rather short, but erect, with broad shoulders, brilliant eyes, rosy cheeks, the reddish brown hair that delights your artistic eye, and as quick in her motions as if she never knew weariness. She's of the kind that never grows old; there are such women. Oh, the comparison is ridiculous — 'tis unkind to Caleb to make it. Besides, she is not the only clever business woman to whom I gave him letters."

"H'm! He's startlingly silent about the others. What troubles me is this: Caleb is so honest and earnest, and so unaccustomed to brilliant women, that he may lose his heart, and the more impossible the affair, the more he'll suffer. 'Twould be bad business to have him go abroad to be cured of malaria, only to return and die of heartache."

"Phil, Caleb isn't a fool."

"No, but he's a man."

XX—PROFIT AND LOSS

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FARMER WEEFER and his wife appeared at the store early on the morning after the deal in walnut land, and the farmer said:—

"Well, want to back out o' the trade?"

"Did you ever hear of me backing out of anything, Mr. Weefer?"

"Can't say I did, but I alluz b'lieve in givin' a man a chance so he can't have no excuse for grumblin' afterwards. Well, we come in early, so's to git our stuff an' git out 'fore a lot of other customers comes in. My wife, she thinks she ort to have some little present or other, as a satisfaction piece for signin' the deed, it bein' the custom in these parts."

"All right, Mrs. Weefer," said Philip, who had heard of several real estate transactions being hampered by refractory wives, and who

thought he saw a good opportunity to prevent any troubles of that kind befalling him in the future, "I think I have some silk dress goods that will please you."

Silk dress goods! No such "satisfaction piece" had ever been heard of in Claybanks or vicinity. Mrs. Weefer saw the goods, accepted it in haste, and did her subsequent trading so rapidly that she and her husband and their two hundred dollars' worth of goods were on the way to the Weefer farm within an hour, and Philip, with the new deed of the "wannut land," was at the County Clerk's office.

"Yes," said the clerk, scrutinizing the paper through his very convex glasses. "My son told me you were in yesterday, inquiring about this. Oh, yes, this property is all clear; there was no reason why any one should lend on it."

"No reason? Why, Squire, what's the matter with good standing black walnut as security?"

"Nothing at all, but I thought all the walnut on Weefer's ground had been cut."

"Not unless 'twas done since yesterday afternoon."

The official removed his glasses, leaned back in his chair, put both feet upon his desk, and looked so long and provokingly at Philip that the latter said:—

"Has it been cut over-night?"

"Oh, no. Take a chair. Are you sure that you saw this property?"

"Entirely sure, unless I was dreaming by daylight. He and I rode over it. I was brought up in the West, so I know walnut trees when I see them."

"Of course, but — did you make sure of the line-marks — the boundaries?"

"Yes. That is, he showed me two blazed trees, which he said marked his line."

"Just so. Did he say which side of the line his own property was?"

"Yes — no — that is, he took me over a lot of ground that contained many fine large walnut trees. See here, Squire, have I been swindled?"

"That depends. Weefer is about as smart as they make 'em, so I don't think he'd be fool enough to swindle any one — not, at

least, so that the law could take hold of him. Did he say the land he showed you was his? Tell me exactly what he said; for if he overreached himself, my old law partner would like to handle the case for you. To win a case against Weefer would be a great feather in his cap. The fact is that all the walnut on Weefer's land consists of stumps, for the trees were cut off two or three years ago. There's a fine lot of standing walnut adjoining it, but it belongs to Doctor Taggess."

"Then I am swindled."

"I hope so — that is, I hope, for the sake of our old firm, which I'll have to go back into if I'm not reëlected, that you've a good case against Weefer. Now tell me — carefully — exactly what he said. Did he say that Taggess's land was his?"

"No — o — o," said Philip, after a moment of thought, "I can't say that he did. We rode out there on horseback, stopped at the edge of some wooded ground, and he said, 'Did you ever see finer walnut land than that?' Those were his very words — I'll swear to them — the old scoundrel!"

"Quite likely, but did he say that those trees — that land — was his?"

"No; not in so many words, but he certainly gave me that impression."

"With what exact words?" Again Philip searched his memory, but was compelled to reply: —

"With no words that I can recall. He talked rapturously about the beauty of a lot of walnut trees, from the money point of view."

"But didn't say, in any way, that they belonged to him?"

"Confound him, no! But he handed me a deed — "

"That's no evidence, unless it was Taggess's deed he showed you, which evidently it wasn't. Well, Mr. Somerton, you've got no case. Morally 'twas a swindle — not a new one, either. He wouldn't have tried it on you if Caleb hadn't been away; for Caleb knows the lay and condition of every tract of land in this county — just as you'll know when you've been here long enough. You've bought forty acres that won't bring you anything but taxes, unless you can find some use for walnut

stumps — and they're harder to get out than any other kind but oak, unless some day the land-owners along the creek combine to put up a levee that'll prevent overflow, so that the land can be farmed, but even then the stumps will be a nuisance. Hope you got it cheap."

"Five dollars an acre," Philip growled.

"Cash?"

"No; trade."

"Trade, eh? Well, that's not so bad, though it's bad enough." The old man's eyes twinkled, for what man of affairs is there who does not enjoy the details of a smart trade — at some other man's expense? Philip noticed the clerk's amused expression and frowned; the clerk quickly continued, "Let me give you some professional advice — no charge for it. Keep entirely quiet about this affair; you may be sure that Weefer won't talk until you do. If the story gets out, you'll never hear the end of it, and 'twon't do your reputation as a business man any good. We don't publish records of transfers in this county, and of course I won't mention it, and I'll see that my son

doesn't either; he's the only other man who has access to the books."

"Thank you very much, Squire. You may count on my vote and influence if you're renominated."

"Much obliged. Whew! Five dollars an acre for a lot of walnut stumps!"

"Five dollars an acre, and a silk dress for Mrs. Weefer's waiver of dower-right," said Philip, so humiliated that he wished to make his confession complete.

"What? Well, Weefer won't talk, but whether he can harness his wife's tongue when she's ready to show off that silk dress is another matter."

Philip started to go, and the clerk made haste to hide his face behind the deed, and silently chuckle himself towards a fit of apoplexy.

"You're absolutely sure that I've no way out of it?" Philip said, pausing for an instant.

"Absolutely," the clerk replied, with some difficulty, his face still behind the deed, "unless — you can find — a market — for — walnut

stumps." Then the clerk coughed alarmingly, and Philip pulled his hat over his eyes and hurried away, with a consuming desire to mount his horse, overtake Weefer, shoot him to death, recover the wagon-load of goods, and particularly the silk dress given to Mrs. Weefer. When he reached the store, he found his wife looking pale and troubled; there were present also three men with very serious countenances, and one of them said: —

"Mr. Somerton, I s'pose?"

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you?"

"You can shell out my colt that's in your barn. I was goin' to take him whether or no, but your wife said you was a square man, an' would do what was right. Well, there's only one right thing in this case, an' that's to gimme back my colt."

"There are but two horses in my stable," said Philip. "One of them I've owned several months, and the other I bought yesterday."

"Who from?"

"From —" Philip took from his pocket the bill of sale and read from it the signature: —

"James Marney."

The three men exchanged grim grins, and the complainant said: —

"His name ain't Marney, an' 'tain't James, neither. He's a no 'count cousin o' mine, an' his name's Bill Tewks. An' he never had no right of any sort or kind to the colt. The colt's mine, an' never was any one else's, an' I can prove it by these two men, an' one of 'em's depitty sheriff of our county, an' he's got a warrant for Bill's arrest for stealin' the hoss. My name's James Marney; I can prove it by any storekeeper in this town, or by Doc Taggess, or your county clerk, or — "

"I'll take your word for it," Philip said hastily, for the thought of exposing a second business blunder to the county clerk in a single day — a single hour, indeed — was unendurable.

"I don't see," continued the claimant of the horse, looking greatly aggrieved, "how a man buys one man's hoss off of another man anyway, leastways of a no 'count shack like Bill Tewks."

"Perhaps not," said Philip, "but I may be able to enlighten you. Do you know a man named Caleb Wright?"

"Know Caleb? Who don't? That ain't all; he's the honestest man I ever *did* know. I wish he was here right now, instead of off to York, as your wife says, for he knows me an' he knows the hoss. Why, a spell ago, not long after old Jethro died, an' I needed some money pooty bad, I writ to Caleb an' ast him what he could git me in cash for the colt, here in town, prices of hosses here bein' some better'n what they be in our county, where there ain't never city buyers lookin' aroun', and Caleb writ back that —"

"One moment, please," said Philip. "He wrote that any one ought to be glad to give you seventy-five dollars, but that you would be foolish to sell, because you could get far more a year later, but that if you really must sell, he wished you would give me the first chance."

The claimant, whose eyes by this time were bulging, exclaimed: —

"You've got a pooty long mem'ry, an' it's as good as it is long."

"As to that, I never saw the letter until yesterday. The man who brought the horse

showed me the letter; otherwise I shouldn't have purchased."

The claimant and his companions exchanged looks of astonishment, and the deputy drawled: —

"How'd he git it, Jim?"

"It beats me," was the reply. "Onless he went through the house like he did the barn. That letter was in the Bible, where I keep some papers o' one kind an' another, cal'latin' that's as safe a place as any, not gettin' much rummagin'. He must 'a' knowed I had it. Oh, he's a slick un, Bill is, when he gits dead broke an' wants to go on a spree. You see, Mr. Somerton, the way of it was this: the wife was off visitin', an' I was ploughin' corn, an' took some snack with me, an' some stuff for the hosses, so's to have a longer rest at noon-time, not havin' to go back all the way to the house. The colt was in the barn, so I didn't miss him till I got home, long about dusk. Bill must 'a' knowed, some way, my wife wa'n't home, an' I could see by the lot o' hay in the colt's rack that he'd been took out 'fore the middle o' the day. I was so knocked by missin' him that I've been

on the track ever sence, an' didn't think to look to see ef anythin' was gone from the house, but the cuss must 'a' prowled 'roun' consid'able ef he got that letter. Didn't bring in my rifle an' shotgun to sell, did he, nor flat-irons, nor cook-stove?"

"No, although he did sell me a saddle and bridle. I hope you'll succeed in catching the scamp."

"Oh, I ain't got no use for him. The furder away he gits, the better satisfied I'll be. We ain't never had no other thief 'mong our relations. I reckon it's you that ought to want him. What I want is my colt, an' I'm goin' to have him — peaceful, ef I kin, or by law, ef I must. He's thar — in your barn; I seen him through the door; so did my frien's here, so there's no good beatin' about the bush an' —"

"Stop!" said Philip. "There's no sense in insinuating that I would knowingly retain stolen property — unless you wish to have your tongue knocked down your throat."

"That's fair talk, Jim, an' I don't blame him for givin' it to you," suggested the

deputy. "Now you chaw yerself for a while, an' let me say somethin'. It don't stan' to reason that any business man is goin' to try to keep a stolen hoss. On 'tother han', he'd be a fool to give up on the word o' three men he never seen till just now. You, Jim, ain't such a fool as to want to air the family skunk so fur from home, an' Mr. Somerton here ain't likely to be over'n above anxious to have a fuss that'll let ev'rybody in town know that he was took in by an amatoor hoss-thief. Now, Jim, jest sa'nter out an' get some square man, an' not a storekeeper that knows ye, to come in an' speak for ye, as if ye wanted to buy some goods on credit. Thet'll prove who ye be, an' like enough he'll know me, too, 'specially if it's — "

"Why not Doctor Taggess?" Philip suggested.

"Good idee," the officer replied, "for he knows both of us."

"An' he knows the colt, too," said the claimant.

"Better and better," Philip declared, for anything would have been preferable, at

Claybanks or any other Western town, to being known as a merchant to whom a thief could sell anything.

Fortunately the Doctor was at home; he came to the store, identified the claimant, vouched for his honesty and truthfulness, and then identified the colt as the claimant's property. Philip told the entire story to the Doctor, who said there was nothing to do but surrender the horse — or repurchase him.

"How much do you want for him, Mr. Marney?"

"Ye ain't said what ye give a'ready."

"No; that's a different matter. What is your price?"

"Cash, note, or trade?"

"Whichever you like, if the figures are right."

"Well, seein' you've been put to expense a'ready, an' I don't need money for a couple o' months yet, an' you'll most likely give more on time than in cash, I'd rather take your sixty-day note for a hundred back home with me than take the colt back. No other man could have him so cheap."

"You shall have it — on condition, written and signed, that neither of you three shall tell the story of the thief's sale. No one else can tell it."

"You'll stand by me, boys?" said the claimant, appealingly.

"Sure!"

"Then I'll take the note, Mr. Somerton, an' you've done the square thing. But say, I'll throw off five dollar ef ye'll tell me what ye paid fer him."

"No," said Philip, beginning to draw a bill of sale to include the condition already specified.

"I'll make it ten."

"No."

"Ah, say! I cayn't sleep peaceful without knowin', but this is rubbin' it in. Fifteen!"

"Sign this, please," said Philip, showing the bill of sale. Then he passed over his own note for eighty-five dollars, and said: —

"I paid seventy-five dollars, cash."

"Well," sighed Marney, "that's a comfort —for besides knowin' how much 'twas, it shows what I wanted to b'lieve, that Bill was as much fool as scoundrel, else he'd 'a' ast more. Good-by, Mr. Somerton an' Doc."

The trio departed. The Doctor remained to condole with the victim, who could not help telling of his real-estate trade. The Doctor laughed, — but not too long, — then he said: —

"There ought to be finer grainings and markings, and, therefore, more money, in walnut roots than in the average of trees. I've been intending to experiment in that direction. As to that colt, let me drive him for you a few days; he may have the making of both prices in him."

When the Doctor departed, Philip got out his own horse and buggy, and insisted that his wife should drive, but Grace was reluctant to go. Something seemed to be troubling her. Philip asked what it was. "I wish Caleb were back," she said.

"*Et tu, Brute?* Now is my humiliation complete; but as Caleb is where he is, let us make the best of it." So saying, he indited the following telegram to Caleb, for Grace to send from the railway station, three miles distant: —

"Look up a buyer for big walnut stumps.

"PHILIP."

XXI — CUPID AND CORN-MEAL

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"*THIS*," said Philip, as he returned one morning from the post-office to the store, with an open letter in his hand, "is about the twelfth letter I've had from old acquaintances in New York, and all are as like unto one another as if written by the same hand. The writers imagine that the West is bursting with opportunities for men whose wits are abler than their hands. What a chance I would have to avenge myself on mine enemy — if I had one!"

"And this," Grace said, after opening a letter addressed to herself that Philip had given her, "is from Mary Truett. I wonder if she has caught the Western fever from Caleb? Oh — I declare!"

"Your slave awaits the declaration."

"She, too, wants to know if there isn't a place here for a clever young man — her

brother; it seems he is a civil engineer and landscape architect."

"Imagine it! A landscape architect — at Claybanks! Ask her if he can live on air, and sleep on the ground with a tree-top for roof. Doesn't she say anything about Caleb?"

"I'm skipping her brother and looking for it, as fast as I can. Yes; here it is. There! Didn't I tell you how sensible she always was? She thanks me for introducing Caleb, and says he's the most interesting and genial man she has met in a long time, though, she says, she wonders whose grammar was in vogue when Caleb went to school. And — dear me! — this is becoming serious!"

"My dear girl," said Philip, "there are different ways of reading a letter aloud. Won't you choose a new one or let me have the letter itself, when you've read it, provided it contains no secrets?"

"Do wait a moment, Phil! You're as curious as women are said to be. It seems that Caleb has persuaded her to accompany him to a prayer-meeting; and as she has also been to a theatre with him, I'm afraid the persuading, or

a hint to that effect, must have been on her part. She says he has completely changed in appearance — and by what means, do you suppose?"

"I can't imagine."

"His beard has gone, and his hair has been cut Eastern fashion, and his mustache turned up at the ends, and he dresses well, — Mary says so, — and that the contrast is startling. Oh, Phil! What if he should — "

"Should what? Fall in love with your paragon of women? Well, I suppose men are never too old to make fools of themselves, and Caleb is only forty, but I beg that you'll at once remind Miss Truett that Caleb is too good a man to be hurt at heart for a woman's amusement. Why are you looking at nothing in that vague manner?"

"I'm trying to imagine Caleb's new appearance."

"Spare yourself the effort. I'll telegraph him for a photograph."

"But I want to know — at once, to see whether he's really impressed Mary more seriously than she admits."

"Oh, you women! You can start a possible romance on less basis than would serve for a dream. Do go backward in that letter, to the lady's brother, if only to suppress your imagination."

"I suppose I must," sighed Grace, "for I've reached the end. The brother, it seems, can secure a railroad pass to visit this country, if there is any possible business opening for him here."

"I wish there were, I'm sure, for I don't know of a place more in need of services such as a landscape architect could render, but you know that he couldn't earn a dollar."

"But it seems that he knows something of road-making and grading."

"Which also are accomplishments that might be put to good use here, if there were any one to pay for the work."

"I have it!" Grace said. "The very thing! Don't you dare laugh at me until I tell it all. You know — or I do — that Doctor Taggess thinks Claybanks would be far less malarious if the swamp lands could be drained. He says the malarious exhalation, whatever it is, seems to be

heavier than the air, and is therefore comparatively local in its effects, for he has known certain towns and other small localities to be entirely free from it, though the surrounding country was full of it. Now, if some surveyor and engineer — say Mary Truett's brother — could find out how to drain our Claybanks swamps, it might make this a healthy town. Is that a very silly notion?"

"Silly? Not a bit of it! But, my dear girl, do you know what such an enterprise would cost?"

"No, but I do know what I suffered on the day of my awful malarial attack and that I shall never forget the spectacle of a poor, dear, little, helpless, innocent baby shaking with a chill!"

"Poor girl! Poor baby! But don't you suppose that our swamp lands have been studied for years by the men most interested in them — the farmers and other owners? — studied and worked at?"

"Perhaps they have, but Doctor Taggess says farmers always do things in the hardest way; they've not time and money to try any other.

Besides, since I began to think of it I've often recalled a case somewhat similar. In our town in western New York the railway station was very inconvenient; it was on a bridge crossing the track, and everything and everybody had to go up and down stairs or up and down hill to get to or from it. It was talked of at town meetings and the post-office and other places, and public-spirited citizens roamed the line from one end of town to the other, looking for a spot where the station could be placed near the level of the track.

"At last they subscribed money to pay for a new site, if the company would move its station to the level, and one day a surveyor and his men came up, and he looked about with an instrument, and a few days afterward a little cutting at one place and a little filling just back of it did the business, and all the village wise-acres called themselves names for not thinking of the same thing, but Grandpa said, 'It takes a shoemaker to make shoes.' You know the swamps are almost dry now, because of the hot weather; don't you suppose a surveyor and engineer, or even a sensible man who's studied

physical geography in school, might be able to go over the ground and learn where and what retains the water? Now laugh, if you like."

"Grace, you ought to have been a man!"

"No, thank you — not unless you had been a woman. But you really think my plan isn't foolish?"

"As one of the owners of swamp land, I am so impressed with your wisdom that I suggest that we invite Miss Truett's brother to visit us; tell him the outlook is bad, but say we'll guarantee him — well, a hundred-dollar fee to look into a matter in which we personally are interested. If your plan is practicable, I'll recover the money easily. I'll write him this afternoon — or you may do it, through his sister. Let us see what else is in the mail. Why, I didn't suspect it, the address being typewritten! — Ah, young woman, now for my revenge, for here's a letter from Caleb, and if 'tis anything like the last — yes, here it is — Miss Truett, Miss Truett, Miss Truett."

"Oh, Phil!"

"I'll be merciful, and read every word, without stopping to sentimentalize: —

"'Dear Philip: I'm in it, as Jonah thought when the whale shut his mouth. When I say "it" I mean all of New York that I can pervade while waiting for the corn-meal to come. I've been to a New York prayer-meeting and I can't say that it was any better than the Claybanks kind, except that Miss Truett went with me and joined in all the hymns as natural as if brought up on them. You ought to hear her voice. 'Tain't as loud as some, but it goes right to the heart of a hymn. Next day I went to a museum in a big park and saw more things than I can ever get straightened out in my head: I wish I could have had your wife's camera for company.

"'I went to a theatre, too. I had no more idea of doing it than you have of selling liquor, but I got into a sort of argument with Miss Truett, without meaning to, about the great amount of that kind of sin that was going on; and when she said that she didn't think it was always sinful, I felt like the man that cussed somebody in the dark for stepping on his toes, and then found it was the preacher that done the stepping. She said she really thought that some kinds of theatre would do a sight of good to a hard-working man like me, and that she'd like to see me under the influence of a good comedy for a spell; so I told her there was one

way of doing it, and that was to name the comedy and then go along with me, so as to give her observing powers a fair chance. She did it, and I ain't sorry I went; though if you don't mind keeping it to yourself, there won't be some Claybanks prayers wasted on me that might be more useful if kept nearer home.

"'Who should I run against on Broadway one day but an old chum of mine in the army? He'd got a commission, after the war, in the regulars, and got retired for a bad wound he got in the Indian country, yet, for all that, he didn't look any older than he used to. He took me visiting to his post of the Grand Army of the Republic one night, and there I saw a lot of vets that looked as spruce and chipper as if they was beaus just going to see their sweethearts. "What's the matter with you fellows here, that you don't grow old?" says I to my old chum. He didn't understand me at first, but when he saw what I was driving at, he said many of the members of the post were older than I, but 'twasn't thought good sense in New York for a fellow to look older than he was, and he didn't see why 'twas good sense anywhere. I felt sort of riled, and he nagged me awhile, good-natured like, about trying to pass for my own grandfather, till I said: "Look here, Jim, if you've got any fountain of youth around

New York, I'm the man that ain't afraid to take a dip." "Good boy!" says he. "I'd like the job of reconstructing you, for old times' sake." "No fooling?" says I; for in old times Jim wouldn't let anything stand in the way of a joke. "Honor bright, Cale," said he, "for I want you to look like yourself, and you can do it." Remembering some advertisements I've seen in newspapers, I says, "What do you do it with — pills or powders?" Jim coughed up a laugh from the bottom of his boots, and says he: "Neither. Come along!"

"'Well, I was skittisher than I've been since Gettysburg, not knowing what new-fangled treatment he had in his mind, and how it would agree with me; but he took me into a barber shop where he appeared to know a man, and he did some whispering, and, — well, when that barber got through, first giving me a hair-cut and then a shave, and fussing over my mustache for a spell, and I got a sight of my face in the glass, I thought 'twas somebody else I was looking at, and somebody that I'd seen before, a long time ago, and it wasn't until I tried to brush a fly off my nose that I found 'twas I. Maybe you think I was a fool, but I was so tickled that I yelled, "Whoop — ee!" right out in meeting. "There!" says Jim, when we got outside. "Don't you ever wear long

hair and a beard again — not while I'm around."

"'Then he took me to a tailor shop about forty times as big as your store, and picked out a suit of clothes for me, and a hat and shirt, and the whole business. 'Twas the Hawk Howl-away business over again, with Jim instead of Jethro, only there was more of it, for he stuck a flower in the buttonhole of my new coat. I couldn't kick, for he was wearing one too, but I just tell you that if I'd met any Clay-banks neighbor about then, I'd have slid down a side street like running to a fire. After that he took me to the hotel where he lived, and up in his room, and looked me over, as if I was a horse, and says he, "There's one thing more. You need a setting-up." "Not for me, Jim," says I. "I keep regular hours, though I don't mind swapping yarns with you till I get sleepy to-night!" Then he let off another big laugh, and says he, "That isn't what I mean. It's some-thing we do in the regulars, and ought to have done in the volunteers." So he made me stand up, and lift my shoulders, and hold my head high, and breathe full, at the same time making me look at myself in the glass. "There!" says he, after a spell, "you do that a few times a day, till it comes natural to you, and you'll feel better for it, all your life."

"'Well, Philip, I don't mind owning up to you that I was so stuck up for the next few hours that at night I thought it necessary to put up a special prayer against sinful vanity. Next morning I went down to your wife's old store to ask Miss Truett something, and she didn't know me. No, sir, she didn't, till I spoke to her. She didn't say anything about it, but she looked like your wife sometimes does when she's mighty pleased about something, and I needn't tell you that looks like them are mighty pleasant to take.

"'Well, I suppose all this sounds like fool-talk, for of course I can't get my birthdays back, but, coming at a time when the malaria appears to be loosening its grip, this looking like I used to before I got broke up is doing me a mighty sight of good.

"'When is that corn-meal coming?

"'Yours always,

"'Caleb Wright.'"

"Phil," exclaimed Grace, "'twould be a sin to hurry that meal East, until — until we hear further from Caleb."

"And from Miss Truett?" said Philip, with a quizzical grin. "Fortunately for both of them, the meal probably reached New York

soon after the date of this letter, which was written four days ago, and Caleb is probably now on the ocean, or about to sail."

"I think 'tis real cruel," Grace sighed, "just as —"

"Just as two mature people began day-dreaming about each other? I think 'tis the best that could befall them, for it will put their sentiment to a practical test. Cupid has struck greater obstacles than the Atlantic Ocean and barrelled corn-meal without breaking his wings."

"Phil, you talk as coldly as if — oh, as if you weren't my husband."

"'Tis because I am your husband, dear girl, and realize what miserable wretches we would be if we weren't, above all else, hearty lovers. What else have I to live for, out here, but you? Suppose any other woman were my wife, brought from everything she was accustomed to, and out to this place where she could find absolutely nothing as a substitute for the past!"

"Or suppose I had married some other man — ugh! — and come here!"

"You would have done just as you have done — seen your duty, done it, and smiled even if you were dying of loneliness. But not all women are like you."

"Because not all men are like you, bless you! — and always ready and eager to make love first and foremost."

"How can I help it, when I've you to love? But tell me now, — frankly, — don't you ever long for the past? Don't you get absolutely, savagely, heart-hungry for it?"

"No — no —!" Grace exclaimed. "Besides, I'm easier pleased and interested than you think. I've learned to like some of our people very much, since I've ceased judging them by their clothes and manner of speech. There are some real jewels among the women, old and young."

"H'm! I'm glad to hear you say so, for I've wanted to confess, for some time, that I am fast becoming countrified, and without any sense of shame, either. I'm becoming so deeply interested in human nature that I've little thought for anything else, aside from business. When I first arrived, I imagined

myself a superior being, from another sphere; now that I know much about the people and their burdens and struggles, there are some men and women to whom I mentally raise my hat. At first I wondered why Taggess, who really is head and shoulders above every one else here, didn't procure a substitute and abandon the town; now I can believe that nothing could drag him away. I can't learn that he ever wrote verses or made pictures or preached sermons, nevertheless he's artist, poet, and prophet all in one. I should like to become his equal, or Caleb's equal—I may as well say both, while I'm wishing; still, I don't like to lose what I used to have and be."

"You're not losing it, you dear boy, nor am I really losing anything. The truth is, that in New York both of us, hard though we worked, were longing for an entirely luxurious, self-indulgent future, and your uncle's will was all that saved us from ourselves. You always were perfection, to my eyes, but I wish you could see for yourself what improvements half a year of this new life have made for you."

"Allow me to return the compliment, though

no one could imagine a more adorable woman than you were when I married you. So long as I am you and you are me — " Then words became inadequate to further estimate and appreciation of the changes wrought by half a year of life at "the fag-end of nowhere — the jumping-off place of the world," as Philip had called Claybanks the first time he saw it by daylight.

XXII — SOME WAYS OF THE WEST

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CALEB and the corn-meal sailed for Europe, but first Caleb wired the address of a firm that would do the fair thing with a car-load of walnut stumps. Miss Truett's brother Harold arrived at Claybanks soon afterward, and when he learned accidentally that Philip wished some walnut stumps extracted and that the land was stoneless, he offered to do the work quickly and cheaply, and his devices so impressed occasional beholders, accustomed to burning and digging as the only means of removing stumps, that the young man soon made several stump-extracting contracts, for which he was to be paid — in land. Meanwhile, from the back of Philip's horse he studied the swamp lands near the town; then he went over the ground with a level, and afterward reported to Philip that for the trifling sum of three thousand dol-

lars, added to right of way for a main ditch, which the farmers should be glad to give free of cost, the swamp lands might be converted into dry, rich farming land.

"This county couldn't raise three thousand dollars in cash," Philip replied, "even if you could guarantee that the main ditch would flow liquid gold."

"If that is the case," said the young man, who had nothing to lose and everything to gain, "and as labor and farm tools are almost the only requirements, — except some cash for my services, — why not form an association of all the owners of swamp lands, determine the share of each in the cost, according to the amount of benefit he'll get, and let all, if they wish, pay in labor at a specified day-price per man, team, plough, or scraper, and go to work at once? Such things have been done. A farmer who hasn't enough working force on his place can generally hire a helper or two, on credit, against crop-selling time. This is just the time to do it, too; for a lot of farmers in the vicinity who have swamp land will have nothing especial to do, now that their winter

wheat is cut, till the thrashing machine comes to them, and others are through with heavy work until corn ripens."

"I begin to see daylight," said Philip. "But, young man, how did you get all these practical wrinkles in New York?"

"By listening to men who've been in the business many years. Most of them have had to take scrub jobs once in a while. But please secure the right of way at once for the main ditch; that's where the work should begin. I shouldn't wonder if you could get a lot of volunteer labor from the villagers, if you go about it rightly; for your Doctor Taggess believes that to drain the swamps would be to greatly lessen the number and violence of malarial attacks, — perhaps banish malaria entirely, — and I suppose you know what it means for a town, in certain parts of the West, to have a no-malaria reputation. It means manufactures, and better prices for building sites, and perhaps the beginnings of a city."

"Mr. Truett, I shouldn't wonder if you've struck just the place to exercise your professional wits."

"I hope so. I'll soon find out, if you'll arrange that combination of landowners, and secure that right of way. Now is the golden time, while the swamp land has least water and the earth is easiest handled."

Doctor Taggess, summoned for consultation on the drainage subject, promised to make an earnest speech at any general meeting that might be called; so Philip hurried about among the merchants, town and county officials, and other local magnates, and arranged for an anti-malaria, city-compelling mass-meeting at the court-house at an early date.

Political jealousies and personal dog-in-the-manger feeling are quite as common in small towns as in great ones, but the possibility of a village becoming a city, and farm property being cut up into building-lots at high prices, is the one darling hope of every little village in the far West, and at the right time — or even at the wrong one — it may be depended upon to weld all discordant elements into one great enthusiastic force. When the meeting was held, Doctor Taggess made a strong

plea for the proposed improvement, from the standpoint of the public health; the young engineer read a mass of statistics on the amazing fertility of drained swamp lands, and announced his willingness to wait for his own pay until his work proved itself effective; and the county clerk told of scores of Western villages, settled no longer ago than Claybanks, that had become cities. The upshot was that the improvement plan was adopted without a dissenting voice, and the right of way was secured at the meeting itself, as was also a volunteer force to begin work at once on the main ditch.

"Truett," said Philip, after the meeting adjourned, and he, the engineer, and Doctor Taggess walked away together, "unless you've made some mistake in your figures, this enterprise will make you a great man in this section of country."

"That's what I wish it to do," was the reply, "for I must make a permanent start somewhere."

"Your offer to defer asking for pay till the drainage should prove successful," said

the Doctor, "helped the movement amazingly, and it also made everybody think you a very fair man."

"Yes? Well, that's why I made it."

"H'm!" said Philip, "you've the stuff that'll make a successful Westerner of you."

"That's what I want to be."

"I don't think you'll regret it," said the Doctor; "for much though I sometimes long to return to the East, and plainly though I see the poverty and limitations of this part of the country, the West is the proper starting-place for a young man, unless he chances to have abundant capital. Even then he might do worse; for, of course, the newer the country, the greater the number of natural resources to be discovered and developed. The people, too, are interested in everything new, and stand together, to a degree unknown at the East, in favor of any improvements that are possible. They do their full share of grumbling and complaining, to say nothing of their full share of suffering, but there's scarcely one of them who doesn't secretly hope and expect to become rich some day, or at least to be part

of a rich community; and they're not more than half wrong, for railways and manufactures must reach us, in the ordinary course of events, and all our people expect to see them. Let me give you an illustration. A year or two ago I drove out one Sunday to see a family of my acquaintance, living in a specially malarious part of the county, who were out of quinine — a common matter of forgetfulness, strange though it may seem. As I neared the house, I heard singing, of a peculiar, irregular kind. As 'twas Sunday, I supposed a neighborhood meeting was in progress. But there wasn't. One of the hundreds of projected Pacific railways had been surveyed through the farm a few months before. On the day of my call three of the seven members of the family were shaking with chills; so to keep up their spirits they were singing, to the music of a hymn-tune, some verses written and printed in the West long ago, and beginning: —

"'The great Pacific railroad
To California, hail!
Bring on the locomotive,
Lay down the iron rail.'

There's Western spirit for you — fighting a chill with hopes of a railway that thus far was only a line of stakes and indefinite promises! Such people are worth tying to; their like cannot be found in any other part of the country."

The work at the main ditch continued without interruption, thanks to a month almost rainless, until the ditch was completed to the creek at one end and to the swamps at the other. Then the main lines in the swamps themselves were opened, one by one, and the swamps became dry for the first time in their history, though small laterals, some to drain springs, others to guard against the accidents of a rainy season, were still to be cut by private enterprise. But the people of Claybanks and vicinity were delighted to so great an extent that dreams of a golden future would not satisfy them, so they planned a monster celebration and procession, and there seemed no more appropriate route of march than up one side of the main ditch and down the other, with a halt midway for speeches and feasting.

The happiest man in all the town — happiest in his own estimation, at least — was Philip; for within a few days he had learned that the despised mining stock which was his only material inheritance from his father had suddenly become of great value. He had sent it to New York to be sold, and learned that the result was almost ten thousand dollars, which had been deposited to his credit at a bank which he had designated. At last he had something wholly his own, should sickness or possible business reverses ever make him wish to abandon his inheritance from his uncle. Grace shared his feeling, and was correspondingly radiant and exuberant, for ten thousand dollars in cash made Philip a greater capitalist than any other man within fifty miles. He could buy real estate in his own right, to be in readiness for the coming "boom" of Claybanks; he could become a banker, manufacturer, perhaps even a railway president, so potent would ten thousand dollars be in an impecunious land.

"You're an utter Westerner — a wild, woolly-brained Westerner," said Philip, after listen-

ing to some of his wife's rose-tinted rhapsodies over the future.

"I suspect I am, and I don't believe you're a bit better," was the reply. "'Tis in the air; we can't help it."

On the day of the celebration Grace gave herself up to fun with her camera, for which she had ordered many plates in anticipation of the occasion; for never before had there been such an opportunity to get pictures of all the county's inhabitants in their Sunday clothes. She was hurrying from group to group, during the great feast at the halt, when Pastor Grateway, who was looking westward, said: —

"Mrs. Somerton, I've heard that you're fond of chasing whirlwinds with your camera. There comes one that looks as if it might make a good picture, if you could get near enough to it."

"Isn't it splendid!" Grace exclaimed. "Doctor Taggess, do look at this magnificent whirlwind!"

The Doctor looked; then he frowned, looked about him, and muttered: —

"At last!"

"Why, Doctor, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, I hope. It may go clear of us. Listen — carefully. Come apart from the crowd; my ears are not as keen as they used to be. Do you hear any sound in that direction?"

"Nothing — except buzz-buzz, as if a hive of bees were swarming."

"I'm glad of it; it mayn't be so bad as I feared. I'm not acquainted with the things, except through common report. Where's Mr. Truett? He had field-glasses slung from his shoulder this morning. Here, you boys!" the Doctor shouted to several youngsters who were playing leap-frog near by, "scatter — find Mr. Truett — the man who bossed the big ditch, and ask him to come here — right away!"

"Doctor!" exclaimed Grace. "Do tell me what you fear."

"Tell me first about that noise. Is it any louder?"

"Yes. It sounds now like a distant railway train. What does it mean?"

"It means a cyclone. How bad a one, we can't tell until it has passed. If it keeps its present course, it will pass north of the crowd, but I am afraid it will strike the town."

By this time many of the people had noticed the great cloud in the west, and soon the entire assemblage heard a deep, continuous roar. Then men, women, and children began to run, for the cloud increased in blackness and noise at a terrifying rate, but the Doctor shouted: —

"Stay where you are! Get to the windward of the platform, and wagons and horses! Pass the word around — quick! Ah, Mr. Truett! What do you see?"

"All sorts of things," said Truett, from behind his field-glasses. "Lightning — and tree boughs — and corn-stalks — and boards — and something that looks like a roof. Also, oceans of rain. We're in for a soaking unless we hurry back to town."

"The soaking's the safer," said the Doctor, adjusting the proffered glasses to his own eyes. "Ah, 'tis as I feared: it is tearing its way through the town. There goes the court-

house roof — and the church steeple." Abruptly returning the glasses, the Doctor shouted as the great cloud passed rapidly to the northward and rain fell suddenly in torrents: —

"Men — only men — hurry to town, and keep close to me when you get there." Then he found his horse and buggy and led a wild throng of wagons, horsemen, and footmen, behind whom, despite the Doctor's warning, came the remaining components of the procession, and up to heaven went an appalling chorus of screams, prayers, and curses, for the word "cyclone" — the word most dreaded in the West since the Indian outbreaks ended — had passed through the crowd.

The outskirts of the town were more than a mile distant, and before they were reached, the throng saw that several buildings were burning, though the rainfall seemed sufficient to extinguish any ordinary conflagration. Philip, who was riding with several other men in a farm wagon, saw, when the wagon turned into the main street, that one of the burning buildings was his own store. Apparently it

had been first unroofed and crushed by the storm, for all that remained of it and its contents seemed to be in a pit that once was the cellar, and from which rose a little flame and a great column of smoke and steam.

"Let's save people first; property afterward!" he replied to the men in the wagon when they offered to remain with him and fight the fire. Afterward he received for his speech great credit which was utterly undeserved, for after an instant of angry surprise at his loss he was conscious of a strange, wild elation. A week earlier, such a blow would have been a serious reverse — perhaps ruin; now, thanks to his long-forgotten mining stock, he was fairly well off and could start anew elsewhere, entirely by himself and unhampered by conditions. He had tried hard to accept Claybanks as his home for life, and thought he had succeeded; but now, through the gloom of the storm, the outer world, especially all parts out of the cyclone belt, seemed delightfully inviting.

"Where'll we find the people to save?" This question, from a man in the wagon, re-

called Philip's better self, and he replied quickly: —

"In the path of the storm, and wherever Doctor Taggess is."

It soon became evident that the cyclone path had been quite narrow, — not much wider, indeed, than the business street, — but the whirling funnel had gone diagonally over the town and thus destroyed or injured more than forty houses, the débris of which did much additional injury. Philip and the men passed rapidly from house to house along the new, rude clearing, and searched the ruins for dead and wounded. Fortunately almost all of the inhabitants of the town had taken part in the celebration. Those who remained were numerous enough to provide many fractures and bruises to be treated by Doctor Taggess and his corps of volunteer nurses, but apparently not one in the town had been killed outright. To obtain this gratifying assurance required long hours of searching far into the night, for some missing persons were found far from their homes, and with extraordinary opinions as to how their change of location had been effected.

Philip worked as faithfully as any one until all the missing were accounted for and all the houseless ones fed and sheltered. Grace had given all possible help to many women and children by taking them into her own home. At midnight, when husband and wife met for the first time since the storm, they reminded each other of what might have happened had there been no celebration and they had been in the store and unconscious of the impending disaster. Together they looked at their own ruins, for which Philip had hired a watchman, so that he might be roused if the smouldering fire should gain headway and threaten the house.

"It might have been worse," Grace said. "We have a roof to shelter us."

"Yes, and we may select a new roof elsewhere in the world, if we like. Perhaps the cyclone was, for us, a blessing in disguise — eh?"

Grace did not answer at once, though her husband longed for a reply in keeping with his own feelings. He placed his arm around his wife, drew her slowly toward the house, and said: —

"You deserve a better sphere of life than this, dear girl. You know well that you would never have accepted this if we had not foolishly committed ourselves to it without forethought or knowledge. Your energy and sympathy will keep you fairly contented almost anywhere, but you shouldn't let them make you unjust to yourself. For my own part, I've done no complaining, but my life here has been full of drudgery and anxiety. Now it seems as though deliverance had been doubly provided for both of us — first by the sale of our mining stock, and to-day through the destruction of our principal business interest. We can injure no one by going away; if the property reverts to the charities which were to be the legatees in case I declined, Caleb will be provided for, even if he, too, chooses to leave Claybanks. What shall it be — stay, or go? Dear girl, there are tears in your eyes — they are saying 'Go!' Let me kiss them away, in token of thanks."

"Tears sometimes tell shocking fibs," said Grace, trying to appear cheerful. "I wouldn't trust my eyes, or my tongue, or even my

heart to decide anything to-night, after such a day. There's but one place in the whole world I shall ever care to be, after this, and that is in your arms — close to your heart."

"And that is so far away, and so hard to reach!" said Philip, forgetting in an instant the day and all pertaining to it.

XXIII — AFTER THE STORM

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SOON after sunrise on the morning after the cyclone, Claybanks began to fill with horror-seekers and rumor-mongers from the outer world; but most of the natives were invisible, for they had worked and talked far into the night. It seemed to the Somertons that they had not slept an hour when they were roused by heavy knocking at the door; then they were amazed to find the sun quite high. The man who had done the knocking handed Philip a telegram, brought from the railway station, an hour distant. It was from New York, and read as follows: —

"Back yesterday. Good as new. English business well started. Cyclone in New York papers this morning. Please don't abuse the Maker of it. Look out for His children. Lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place. Do you want anything from here? Answer. If not, I start West at once.

"CALEB."

"'Tis evident he hasn't given up his habit of early rising," said Philip, as he gave the despatch to his wife. When she had read it, Grace said: —

"Dear Caleb! His return is absolutely providential, and his despatch is very like him."

"I'm not quite sure of that," Philip replied, shaking his head doubtingly, yet smiling under his mustache. "To be entirely like Caleb, it should have said that the cyclone was a means of grace."

"I think he distinctly intimates as much, where he refers to the Maker of the storm."

"True. Well, he expects an answer, and I will make it exactly as you wish."

Grace rubbed her drowsy eyes and instantly became alert. She looked inquiringly at her husband, and said: —

"Exactly as I wish? May I write it?"

"May you? What a question! Was there ever a time when your wish was not law to me?"

"Never — bless you! — but some laws are hard to bear."

"Not when you make them, sweetheart. Aren't we one? Write the answer."

Grace's eyes became by turns melting, luminous, dancing, — exactly as they had been of old, at the rare times when Philip would come home from the office with a pleasing surprise, — opera-tickets, perhaps, or the promise of an afternoon and night at the seashore, or a moonlight trip on the river. They reminded him of the delightful old times of which they seemed to promise a renewal, and his heart leaped with joy at the hope and belief that the answer Grace would write would break the chains that bound her and him to Claybanks. While Grace wrote, Philip closed his eyes and imagined himself and his wife spending a restful, delightful summer together, far from the heat, dust, shabbiness, and dilapidation of their part of the West. Certainly they would have earned it, and was not the laborer worthy of his hire?

He was aroused from his dreams by a bit of paper thrust into his hand. He opened his eyes and read: —

"Count on me to do as you would in the same circumstances. Will reopen for business at once. Duplicate in New York your

purchases of a few weeks ago. Refer to —— Bank, in which I have a large deposit. Then hurry home.

"PHILIP."

Apparently Philip read and re-read the despatch, for he kept his eyes upon the paper a long time. When finally he looked from it he saw his wife's countenance very pale and strained. He sprang toward her, and exclaimed: —

"My dear girl, you are sacrificing yourself!"

"Oh, no, I am not," Grace whispered.

"Then why are you trembling so violently? — why do you look like a person in the agony of death?"

"Because — because I fear that I am trying to sacrifice you — dooming you for life. The despatch shan't go, for you don't like it. Yet I wrote only what I thought was right. All that you inherited from your uncle was earned here, from the people who have suffered by the cyclone, or must suffer from the troubles that will follow it. 'Twould be heartless — really dishonest — to leave them, wouldn't it? Besides, many of them like

us very much, and have learned to look up to us, after a fashion. Perhaps I wrote too hastily; it may not be practicable, but — "

"Trying, at least, will be practicable," said Philip, after a mighty effort against himself. "'When in Rome, do as the Romans do;' when with an angel, follow the angel's lead. I'll hire some one at once to take the despatch to the wire, and then — why, then I'll wonder where to reopen for business until the store can be rebuilt."

"Why won't the warehouse answer? And why don't you go at once to the city? — 'tis only a trip of three or four hours, buy a small assortment of groceries and other things most likely to be called for at once, and order a larger stock, by wire, from Chicago? Caleb's purchases will follow quickly. While you're away I'll manage to get the warehouse into some resemblance to a store ready for goods; some men can surely be hired, and I'll get Mr. Truett to help devise such make-shifts as are necessary. You can be back by to-morrow night, if you start at once."

"Upon my word, dear girl, you talk like a business veteran from a cyclone country. If woman's intuitions can yield such business telegrams and plans as you've disclosed within ten minutes, I think it is time for men to go into retirement."

"Women's intuitions, indeed!" Grace murmured, with an accompaniment of closing eyes, yawning, stretching, and other indications of insufficient slumber. "I've lain awake most of the night, wondering what we ought to do and how to do it."

"And your husband stupidly slept!"

"Not being a woman, he wasn't nervous, and I am very glad of it. As for me, I couldn't sleep, so I had to think of something, and I knew of nothing better to think of. But before you go to the city let's get into the buggy and drive over the course of the storm in our county, and see if any one specially needs help."

"And leave the remains of our store smouldering?"

"We can get Mr. Truett to attend to it. Engineers ought to know something about keeping fires down."

"I wonder where he is. I thoughtlessly asked him to breakfast with us this morning. I hope he's not starving somewhere, in anticipation. I hope, also, that we've enough food material in the house to last a day or two; we've the ice-house and warehouse to fall back upon for meats. By the way, isn't it fortunate that I adopted Uncle Jethro's habit of keeping most of the store cash on my person? Otherwise we'd be penniless until the safe could be got from the ruins, and cooled and opened."

While Grace was preparing breakfast Philip hurried about to learn whether any additional casualties of the storm had been reported, and he soon encountered the young engineer, who looked as cheerful as if cyclones were to be reckoned among blessings.

"I've been out on horseback since daylight," said he, "and everything is lovely."

"There's some ground for difference of opinion," replied Philip, looking at the damaged court-house and church.

"I meant at the ditch and the swamps," the young man explained hastily. "In spite of the great rainfall yesterday, the ditch did not over-

flow, nor is there any standing water in the swamps. That isn't all; enough trees have been knocked down, within three or four miles of town, to make a block pavement for the main street — perhaps enough to pave the road from here to the railway, so that full wagon-loads could be hauled all winter long. But there's still more: the creek has been accidentally dammed, a mile or two from town, by a bridge that the cyclone took from its place and set up on edge in the stream. A little work there, at once, would prepare a head for the water-power which I'm told the town has been palavering about for years, and if you don't want water-power, 'twould supply plenty of good water to be piped to town, to replace the foul stuff from wells that have been polluted by drainage. Doctor Taggess says some of the wells are to blame for many of the troubles charged to malaria."

"Harold Truett," said Philip, "do have mercy upon us! We'll yet hear of you engineers trying to get the inhabitants of a cemetery interested in some of your enterprises. Block pavements, indeed! — and water-power! — and a reservoir!

— and pipe-service! — all this to a man whose principal lot of worldly goods is still burning, and in a town not yet a full day past a cyclone!"

"Oh, the town's all right," said Truett, confidently. "At least, the people are. Already they're making the best of it and trying to make repairs, and wondering to one another, in true Western fashion, if the disaster won't make the town widely talked of, and give it a boom."

"They are, eh? Well, I shan't allow the procession to get ahead of me. Do you wish to superintend the transforming of my warehouse into a temporary store, while I hurry away to buy goods? Mrs. Somerton can tell you what we need. You may also see that the fire which is consuming the remains of the old store is kept down or put out. I think the two jobs will keep you very busy."

"Quite likely, but I wish you'd keep that block pavement and water-power and reservoir in mind, and speak to people about them. A town is like a man: if it must make a new start, it might as well start right, and for all it is worth."

"Bless me! You've been here less than two

months, yet you talk like a rabid Westerner! Do you chance to know just when and where you caught the fever?"

"Oh, yes," replied the young man, with a laugh. "I got it in New York, while listening to your man, Caleb Wright. I couldn't help it. I forgot to say that now ought to be the time to coax a practical brick-maker to town, and show what the banks of clay are really good for. Do it before the state newspapers stop sending men down here to write about the cyclone, and you'll get a lot of free advertising. And a railway company ought to be persuaded to push a spur down here; they would do it if you had water-power and any mills to use it."

"Anything else? Are all engineers like you? — contriving to turn nothing into something?"

"They ought to be. That's what they were made for. So were other people, though some of them seem slow to understand it. I wish you'd appoint me a reception committee to talk to all newspaper correspondents that come down to write up the horrors. If you'll tell your fellow-citizens to refer all such chaps to

me, I'll engage to have the town's natural resources exploited in fine style."

Philip promised, and an hour later when he and Grace were driving rapidly over one of the county roads, Philip said that if Miss Truett were of like temperament to her brother, it was not strange that she was head of a large department. Still, Philip thought it strange that a young man of so much energy and perceptive power should see anything promising in Claybanks.

"'Tis all because of Caleb," Grace replied confidently. "Mr. Truett says that Caleb was quite voluble about the defects of the country, but his truthfulness was fascinating through its uniqueness."

"H'm! 'Tis evident that Caleb was the cause of Truett coming here, so the town is still more deeply in debt to Caleb, who, poor chap, will return to miss everything that he left behind him in his room, and even the roof that sheltered him."

"And he was so attached to his belongings, too!" Grace said. "Do invite him, by wire, to regard our home as his own; he is not the

kind of man to abuse the invitation, and I'm sure he will appreciate it."

Within six hours Philip had seen all of his own customers who had been in the track of the storm, he had asked if there was anything in particular he could bring them from the city, and assured them that if they did not make free use of him, they would have only themselves to blame. Naturally, he did not neglect to say that within a week he would have on sale as large an assortment of goods as usual, and one with no "dead stock" in it. Before nightfall, he was in the nearest small city, and purchasing at a rate that made the dealers glad, and he was also ordering freely by wire from Chicago houses that had sold to Jethro Somerton for years, and who felt assured that no mere cyclone and fire could lessen the Somerton power to pay. Twenty-four hours later he was at home, congratulating his wife and Truett on the transformation of the dingy warehouse into a light, clean-appearing room, thanks to hundreds of yards of sheeting that had been tacked overhead in lieu of ceiling, and also to the walls. Counters had been

extemporized, and shelving was going up. Some of the contents of the old store had been saved, and the remainder was being drenched by a bucket brigade, under the direction of Truett, who reported that he had had no trouble in securing workmen, for Mrs. Somerton had asked them as a special favor to her, and they had tumbled over one another in their eagerness to respond. As to himself, he had found time to draw exterior and interior plans for a new store to be erected on the old foundations, and he begged permission to begin work as soon as the ruins were cool; for, said he, "Lumber and labor will never be cheaper here than they are now."

"As I remarked before I left, you're a rabid Westerner," Philip said, in admiration of the young man's enthusiasm.

"Give it any name you like," was the reply, "though I'm suggesting only what any Eastern man would do. Besides, I'd like to see everything well started or arranged before Caleb can reach here."

"You seem to have become remarkably fond of Caleb on very short acquaintance," said Philip.

"I have," was the reply, "and since I've learned that he was sent East principally to regain his health, I'd like, in justice to both you and him, that he should find nothing to give him a setback. That's only fair, isn't it?"

"'Tis more than fair. 'Tis very hearty, and greatly to your credit."

"Oh, well; put it that way, if you like."

Philip's goods began to arrive a day later, in farm wagons, moving almost in procession to and from Claybanks and the railway town, and several men worked at unpacking them, while Philip and Grace arranged them on the shelves and under the counters. When Saturday night ended the fourth day, the merchant and his wife were fit to enjoy a day of rest on Sunday. Sunday morning came, and while Philip and Grace were leisurely preparing their breakfast, there was a knock at the door. Philip opened it, and shouted: —

"Grace!"

Grace hurried from the kitchen, embraced a lady whom she saw, and exclaimed: —

"Mary Truett!"

"Mrs. Wright, if you please," replied the lady.

"I beg a thousand pardons!" Grace gasped. She soon recovered herself and looked very roguish as she continued, "Won't you kindly introduce me to the distinguished-looking stranger beside you?"

Then Caleb pushed his hat to the back of his head, slapped his leg noisily, and exclaimed: —

"Distinguished — looking — stranger! Hooray!"

XXIV — HOW IT CAME ABOUT

"*NOW*, Caleb," said Philip, after the four had been seated at the breakfast table so long that most of the food had disappeared, "tell us all about it. Don't leave out anything."

"All right," said Caleb, after emptying his coffee-cup. "I'll begin at the beginning. I don't s'pose 'tis necessary to tell any of you that New York is a mighty big city, an' London is another, so —"

"New York savors of business, and so does London," said Philip, "and as this is Sunday, I must decline to hear a word about worldly things. I'm amazed that so orthodox a man as you should think of such matters on Sunday."

"Tell him, Caleb," Grace added, "and tell me also, about something heavenly — something angelic, at least — something resembling a special mercy, or a means of grace." As she

spoke, she looked so significantly at Mary, that Caleb could no longer pretend to misunderstand.

"Well," said he, "as I came back double when you expected only to see me single, I s'pose a word or two of explanation would only be fair to all concerned. You see, before I started for London I felt pretty well acquainted with Mary, for I'd been in New York two or three weeks. That mightn't seem a long time, to some, in which to form an acquaintance that will last through life an' eternity, but such things depend a lot on the person who's doin' 'em, an', as you know, my principal business for years has been to study human nature in general, an' particularly whatever specimen of it is nearest at hand. In New York it had come to be as natural as breathin', an' mighty interestin' too, especially when the person's p'ints were first-rate, an' I had reason to believe that I was bein' studied at the same time by somebody who had a knack at the business an' didn't have any reason to mean harm to me."

"Any one — any New Yorker, at least, — would have found Caleb an interesting subject, —

don't you think so?" said Mary, with a shy look of inquiry.

"I'm very sure that Philip and I did," Grace replied.

"Well, 'twas all of Mrs. Somerton's doin', for she gave me a letter of introduction to Miss Mary Truett: the Lord reward her accordin' to her works, as the Apostle Paul said about Alexander the Coppersmith. I carried a lot of other letters, you'll remember, and every one to whom they were given was quite polite an' obligin'; but business is business, so as soon as the business was done, they were done with me. But Mary wasn't."

"She wasn't allowed to be," Mary whispered.

"I reckon that's so," Caleb admitted; "for somehow I kept wantin' to hear the sound of her voice just once more — just to see what there was about it that made it so different from other voices, so I kept makin' business excuses that I thought were pretty clever an' reasonable-like, an' she was always good-natured enough to take 'em as they were meant."

"What else could she do?" asked Mary, with an appealing look. "The rules against

personal acquaintances dropping into the store to chat were quite strict, and applied to heads of departments as well as to other employees. Caleb's plausible manner deceived no one, but he was so odd, at first, and so entertaining, that every one in authority in the store quickly learned to like him, and were glad to see him come in. They would make excuses to saunter near us, and listen to the conversation, and whenever he went out, some of them remained to tease me. They saw through him before I did, and made so much of what they saw that, in the course of time, I had to work hard to rally myself whenever I saw Caleb approaching."

"She did it splendidly, too," said Caleb. "In a little while I got so that my eye could catch her the minute I found myself inside the store, no matter how many people were between us, yet I'm middlin' short, as you know, an' she isn't tall. She'd be talkin' business, as sober as a judge, with somebody, but by the time I got pretty nigh, her face would look like a lot o' Mrs. Somerton's pet flowers —red roses, an' white roses, an' a couple o'

rich pansies between, an' around 'em all a great tangle o' gold thread to keep 'em from gettin' away."

"Caleb!" exclaimed Mary. "Your friends want only facts."

"I'm sure he's giving us nothing else," Grace said, looking admiringly at Mary, while Philip added: —

"He's doing it very nicely, too. Bravo, Caleb! Go on."

"Well, she was kind o' curious about the West, like a good many other New Yorkers who hadn't ever been away from home, and one day she asked me if there was any chance out here for a young man who was a civil engineer and landscape architect. She said so much about the young man's smartness an' willingness, an' pluck, an' good nature, that all of a sudden I found myself kind o' hatin' that young man, an' it didn't take me long to find out why, an' when I saw that the trouble was that I was downright jealous of him, I said to myself, 'Caleb, you're an old fool,' an' I put in some good hard prayin' right then an' there. Suddenly she explained that the young

man was her brother, an' — well, I reckon there never was a prayer bitten off shorter an' quicker than that prayer was. She wished he could meet me, an' I said that any brother o' hers could command me at any time an' anywhere, so we fixed it that I should call at their house that very evenin'. Well, I liked his looks an' his p'ints in general, an' he asked no end o' the right kind o' questions, an' she helped him. I told 'em ev'rythin', good an' bad — specially the latter — malaria, scattered population, bad roads, poor farming, poor clothes, scarcity of ready cash, all the houses small an' shabby; for up to that time it seemed to me that everybody in New York lived in a palace an' wore Sunday clothes ev'ry day of the week; afterwards I went about with some city missionaries an' policemen, an' came to the conclusion that the poorest man in this town an' county is rich, compared with more than half of the people in New York. But that's gettin' over the fence an' into another field. Her brother was so interested that nothin' would do but that I should go back an' take supper with 'em next evenin' an' con-

tinue the talk. Well, 'Barkis was willin',' as a chap in one of your circulatin' library books said. Pity that library's burned; I'll put up half the expense of a new one, for if ever there was a means of grace—"

"It shall be replaced," said Philip, "but—one means of grace at a time. Do go back to the original story."

"Oh! Well, the next day happened to be the one in which I met my old army chum, Jim, who reconstructed me in the way I wrote you about. One consequence of Jim's over-haulin' was that when I got to their house an' walked into their parlor, they didn't know me from Adam; both of 'em stood there, like a couple o' stuck pigs."

"What an elegant expression!" exclaimed Mary.

"You don't say that as if you b'lieved it over an' above hard, my dear, but I do assure you that the expression means a lot to Western people. Pretty soon her brother came to himself an' asked what had happened, an' I said, 'Oh, nothin', except that when I'm in Turkey, an' likely to stay awhile, I try to do as the

turkeys do.' Well, things kept goin' on, about that way, for some days, an' between thinkin' 'twas time for that corn-meal to come, an' wishin' that it wasn't, an' wishin' a lot of other things, I was in quite a state o' mind for a while, an' self-examination didn't help me much.

"All the time there kep' runnin' in my mind an old sayin' that your Uncle Jethro was mighty fond of — 'There's only one hoss in the world,' an' the most I could do to keep from bein' a plumb fool was to remind myself that that sort of a hoss had some rights of its own that ought to be respected. I showed off my own good p'ints as well as I could, an' I coaxed Mary to go about with me considerable, because Mrs. Somerton had told me that her judgment and taste were remarkably good, — that's the excuse I made, — an' we talked about a lot o' things, an' found we didn't disagree about much. I accidentally let out what I was goin' to England for, an' she got powerful interested in it, for she'd read an' heard lots about the way the poorest English live in big cities, so she thought I was really goin'

on missionary work, an' she said she would almost be willing to be a man if she could have such a job.

"She looked so splendid when she said it that I felt plumb electrified — felt just as if a new nerve had suddenly been put into me some way, so I made bold to say that she'd do that sort o' work far better as a woman, an' that there was a way for her to do it, too, if she was willin', an' if her minister would say a few words appropriate to that kind of arrangement."

"That is exactly the way he spoke," said Mary, "and as coolly as if he wasn't saying anything of special importance."

"Caleb's mind is sometimes in the clouds," Grace said, "where everything for the time being appears just as it should be."

"That must be so, I reckon, Mrs. Somerton," said Caleb, "seein' that you say it; but I want to remark that if I was in the clouds that day, I got out of 'em mighty quick, an' down to earth, an' mebbe a mighty sight lower; for Mary suddenly turned very white, an' right away I felt as if Judgment Day had come,

an' I'd been roped off among the goats. But all of a sudden she turned rosy, an' said, very gentle-like an' sweet, 'Tis a long way to London, an' you might change your mind on the way.' Said I, 'Tis longer to eternity, but I'll be of the same mind till then, an' after, too.' She was kind o' skittish for a while after that, but she didn't do any kickin', which I took for a good sign."

"Kicking, indeed!" said Mary, studying the decoration of her coffee-cup. "Breathing was all the poor thing dared hope to do."

"Well, at last she said she thought it might be better for me to go alone, so both of us could have a fair chance to think it over, an' I said that I wouldn't presume to doubt the good sense of whatever she thought, an' that her will was law to me, an' would go on bein' so as long as she would let it. Just then the corn-meal came, an' I went. After I got fairly started on the trip, I found myself feelin' kind o' glad she wasn't with me. As we've just been eatin' breakfast, I won't go into particulars; but after I got over bein' seasick, I felt as well an' strong as a giant,

an' I ran a private prayer an' praise meetin' all the way across. At first I was sorry that I hadn't asked her for her picture to take along, but I soon found that I had one — had it in both eyes, day an' night, an' all the time I was in London, too, an' the more I looked at it, the more I wanted to see the original again.

"This bein' Sunday, I won't say anythin' more about the business than that I got it started well, didn't slight it, an' left it in good hands. Gettin' back to the United States appeared to take a year; I used to look at as much as a passenger could see of the engine, an' wish I could put my heart into it to make it work faster. One day we reached New York about sundown, an' I s'pose I needn't say whose house I made for at once, with my heart in my mouth. 'Twasn't hard to make out that she wasn't a bit sorry to see me, so my heart got out of my mouth at once, an' gave my tongue a change. She asked about my trip, an' told me about her letter to you about her brother, an' about your kind invitation to him, an' how

busy he already was in Claybanks, an' she was able to tell me a lot about both of you, all of which I was mighty glad to hear, but after a while there came a kind o' silent spell, so I said: —

"Speakin' about thinkin' it over, I've been doin' nothin' else, an' I haven't changed my mind. How is it with you?' She didn't say anythin', for about a million hours, it seemed to me, but at last she put out both of her hands, kind o' slow-like, but put 'em out all the same, bless her; so I —"

"Caleb," exclaimed Mrs. Wright, severely.

"We understand," said Philip, "having had a similar experience a few years ago;" and Grace said: —

"Blushes are very becoming to you, Caleb."

"Thank you — very much. But how do you s'pose I felt next mornin' after wakin' up with the feelin' that this world was Paradise, an' that it couldn't be true that there were such things as sin an' sorrow an' trouble, an' then seein' the whole front of my mornin' paper covered with the Claybanks cyclone, an' nothin' to tell who was killed an' who was

spared! 'Twas nigh on to seven o'clock when I saw the news, an' for a few minutes I did the hardest, fastest thinkin' I ever did in my life. I sent you a despatch, hopin' that you were among the saved, an' by eight o'clock I was at Mary's house. She'd seen the paper, so she wasn't surprised to see me. She was just startin' for the store, so I walked along with her, an' I said:—

"It couldn't have come at a more awful time, so far as my feelin's are concerned, but the Claybanks people are my own people, after a fashion, an' some of 'em need me — that is, they'll get along better if they have me to talk to for a while. Will you forgive me if I hurry out to them? You won't think me neglectful, or less loving than I've promised to be, will you?' Then what did that blessed woman do but quote Scripture at me — 'Whither thou goest I will go, an' where thou lodgest I will lodge, and thy people shall be my people.' 'Twas a moment or two before I took it all in; then I said, to make sure that I wasn't dreamin', 'Do you mean that you'll marry me — to-day — an' go out to

Claybanks with me by this evenin's train?' An' she said, 'Could I have said it plainer?' By that time we were in a hoss-car, so I couldn't—"

"Caleb!" again exclaimed Mrs. Wright, warningly.

"All right, my dear; I won't say it. I didn't know, until afterward, that Mrs. Somerton had been fillin' Mary up with letters about me an' my supposed doin's for some of the folks out here. I don't doubt that those stories were powerful influential in bringin' things to a head. Well, while she went to the store to give notice to quit, an' to have a fuss, perhaps, all on my account, I went to a newspaper office to find out if any more news had come since daylight began. I wanted to know the worst, whatever it was, an' when they told me that nobody was dead, so far as could be learned, I wanted to wipe up part of the floor of that newspaper office with my knees, an' I didn't care a continental who might see me do it, either.

"Then I went down to her store, an' got a word with her, though she was rattlin' busy.

Queer, though, how sharp-eyed some of those New Yorkers are. Mary hadn't had a bit of trouble. The firm wasn't surprised when she began to make her little statement — they said they'd seen, a month or two before, how matters were likely to go, so they'd selected her successor, sorry though they were at the idea of losing her. They hadn't supposed the notice to quit would be so sudden, but after they compared notes about the front page of a mornin' paper they agreed that they'd be likely to lose Mary as soon as I struck New York. I s'posed men as busy as the owners of such a business would have forgotten the name of Claybanks, if they'd ever heard it, an' I wouldn't have supposed that they'd ever have heard anythin' about me; but bless you, they knew it all, an' they took Mary's words out of her mouth, as soon as she explained that a dear friend who had just arrived from Europe needed her companionship and assistance in a trip to the West. 'We hope Mr. Wright isn't ill,' said one of the partners, an' the other said, 'We greatly hope so, for we learn from the Commercial Agency that

he is really as prominent and useful a man as there is in his county.' Think o' that, — not that the Agency, whatever it is, was right, but think of me bein' on record in any way in New York, an' of those old chaps havin' known all about Mary an' me! It's plain enough that New York folks are as keen-eyed as the best, an' that they've got one thing that we Westerners don't know a single thing about, an' that's system.

"But I'm strayin' again. At the store I arranged with her that we should be married at her church at four o'clock that afternoon. Soon after leavin' the store I got your despatch, which I didn't doubt had already been read up in heaven — bless you both! It didn't take more than two hours to duplicate the orders of a few weeks before; then I went to her house, for the last time, an' she was already dressed for the weddin' — dressed just as she is now. There were a couple of hours to spare, an' as I'd ordered our railroad tickets, I improved the time by tryin' to persuade her relatives, who had been called in on short notice, that she was

goin' to be in safe hands. But there wasn't a chance to talk more'n two minutes at a time, for the door-bell kept ringin', an' messengers kept comin' in with flowers an' presents, most of 'em from people at the store. There's two trunks full of 'em, comin' along by express. Of course we were goin' to have a quiet weddin' — nobody invited to the church but her fam'ly an' two or three of her relatives, an' my old army chum Jim; but when we got there, a whole lot of folks were inside the church, an' when we started out after the ceremony they crowded to the aisle, an' some threw flowers in it, an' then for the first time the dear little woman learned that the store people had turned out in force, the proprietors among 'em, an' all the women kissed the bride, an' a lot of 'em cried, an' — oh, nobody ever saw such goin's on at any weddin' in the Claybanks church. An' — to wind up the story — here we are, ready for business, when Monday comes. I telegraphed Black Sam to find an empty house for us somewhere, knowin' that my old room was gone, an' — "

"You're to live with us," said Philip. "You know we've room to spare, and I know that my wife will be delighted to have your wife with her."

"Thank you, Philip. Mrs. Somerton's taste in women is as correct as in everythin' else."

"But doesn't your brother know?" asked Grace of Mary.

"No," was the reply. "Some things are easier told than written. Besides, he's the dearest brother in the world, and thinks whatever I do is right. How I long to see him!"

"I'll find him at once," said Philip, rising. "'Twas very thoughtless of me to have neglected him so long, but between astonishment and delight I—"

"You won't have far to look," said Caleb, who had moved toward the window. "Mary, come here, please—stand right beside me—close—to protect me in case he offers to knock me down."

Philip opened the door, and Truett said:—

"I've just heard that Caleb came over from the railway station this morning. Has

he — oh, Mary! Just as I might have expected, if I hadn't been too busy to think."

"You don't act as if you had any ill feelin' toward me," said Caleb, as Truett, after much affectionate demonstration toward his sister, greeted his brother-in-law warmly.

"Ill feeling? I'm delighted — quite as much delighted as surprised. I saw how 'twould be before you sailed, for my sister has always been transparent to me. As to you, any one who saw you in Mary's presence could see what was on your mind. That was why I came out here. There were other places I might have selected for my own purposes, but when I saw how matters were going, I was determined that the town in which my sister was to live, in the course of time, shouldn't be malarious and shabby and slow if I could do anything to better it."

"Aha!" said Philip, with the manner of a man upon whom a new light had suddenly shone. "Now I understand your rage for local improvements, and your Western fever in all its phases."

"Could I have had better cause?"

Philip looked admiringly at Mary, and answered: —

"No."

The table was cleared by so many hands that they were in the way of one another; then the quintet adjourned to the windward side of the house, under the vine-clad arbor, and began to exchange questions. Suddenly Grace said: —

"There's something new and strange about Caleb — something besides his change of appearance and his happiness, and I can't discover what it is."

"Perhaps," said Mary, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, "'tis his grammar."

Caleb's eyes expressed solicitude as they turned toward Grace, and they indicated great sense of relief when Grace clapped her hands and exclaimed: —

"That is it!"

"Well," said Caleb, "it does me good to know that the change is big enough to see, for it's taken a powerful lot o' work. I used to be at the head of the grammar class when I was a boy at school, but 'Evil communications

corrupt good manners,' as the Bible says, an' I've been hearin' the language twisted ev'ry which way ever since I left school. I never noticed that anythin' was wrong till I got into some long talks with Mary, an' even then I didn't suppose that 'twas my manner o' speech that once in a while made her twitch as if a skeeter had suddenly made himself too familiar. One evenin' — I didn't know till afterwards that she'd had an extra hard day at the store, an' had brought a nervous headache home with her — she gave an awful twitch while I was talkin', an' then she whispered 'Them!' to herself, an' looked as disapprovin' as a minister at a street-fight. Then all of a sudden my bad grammar came before my eyes, as awful as conviction to a sinner. But I was tryin' to set my best foot forward, so I went on: —

"'I said "them" for "those" just now, perhaps you noticed?'

"'I believe I did,' said she.

"'Well,' said I, 'that word was pounded into me so hard at school one day that I've never been able to get rid of it. You see, I was the teacher's favorite, after a fashion, because it

was known that I was expectin' to study for the ministry, so the teacher kept remindin' me that grammar was made to practise as well as recite, an' 'twasn't of any use to use the language correctly in the class if I was goin' to smash it an' trample on the pieces on the playground. I took the warnin', an' one day, when four of us boys were havin' a game of long-taw at recess I said somethin' about "those" marbles. One of the boys jumped as if he had been shot, and when he came down he rolled back his lips an' said "Those!" kind o' contemptuous-like, an' another snickered "Those!" an' the other growled "Those!" an' then the first one said, "Fellers, Preachy's puttin' on airs; let's knock 'em out of him," an' then all of 'em jumped on me an' pounded me until the bell rang us in from recess, an' from that time to this I've stuck to "them" like a penitent to the precious promises.'

"Well, she had a laugh over that; she said afterward that it cured her headache, but after quietin' down she said, lookin' out o' the side o' her face kind o' teasin'-like, an' also mighty bewitchin': —

"'What did the boys do to make you say "ain't" for "haven't"?'

"Then I was stuck, an' laughed at myself as the best way of turnin' it off, but for the rest of the evenin' I was chasin' the old grammar back through about twenty years of army talk an' store talk, an' 'twas harder than a dog nosin' a rabbit through a lot full o' blackberry patches, an' I reckon I lost the scent a good many times. I stayed in the city that night, so as to get into a bookstore an' a grammar book early next mornin', an' I dived into that book ev'ry chance I got, in the hoss-cars an' ev'rywhere else, an' when I was on the ocean an' not sayin' my prayers, nor readin' the Bible, I was doin' only three things, an' generally doin' all of 'em at once, — thinkin' of Mary, keepin' my head an' shoulders up as my old soldier-chum Jim had made me promise to do, an' puttin' Claybanks English into decent grammatical shape. I tried to stop droppin' my 'g's' too, for she seemed to think they deserved a fightin' chance o' life, even if they did come in only on the tail-ends of words; I'd have got along fairly well at it, if it hadn't been for the English people,

but some of them seem to hate a 'g' at the end of a word as bad as if it was an 'h' at the beginnin', which is sayin' a good deal. But see here, isn't it most church time? I s'pose the sooner I take up my cross, the less I'll dread it."

"Caleb," exclaimed Grace, in genuine surprise, "it can't be possible that you've been backsliding, and learning to dislike religious services?"

"Oh, no," Caleb replied, looking quizzically at his wife; "but you're the only old acquaintances I've met since I was married, an' at church I'll meet two or three hundred, an' Claybanks people don't often have any one new to look at an' talk about, an' any surprise of that kind is likely to hit most of 'em powerful hard."

"Go very early," Grace suggested, "and sit as far front as possible. Philip and I will break the news to the minister before he reaches the church, and we'll stand outside and tell the people as they arrive, so that they can collect their wits and manners by the time the service ends."

"That'll be a great help," said Caleb. Then he drew Grace aside and whispered with a look that was pathetic in its appeal: "Try to make her understand, won't you, that our folks are a good deal nicer than they look? You went through it alone, a few months ago. I saw your face, an' my heart ached for you, but to-day I'm tremblin' for Mary. What do you s'pose she'll think after she's looked around?"

"About what I myself did," Grace replied. "I thought, 'I've my husband,' and from that moment Philip was far dearer to me than he had been."

"Is that so? Glory! Mary, put on your bonnet. Let's be off for church."

XXV—LOOKING AHEAD

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"*WELL*, Philip," said Caleb, as the two men met on the piazza before sunrise Monday morning, "as Sunday's gone an' as there's no one here but you an' I, let's talk business a little bit. You mustn't think that my having taken a wife is going to make me an extra drag on you, an' right after a cyclone, too. My salary's enough to support two on the best that Claybanks can provide, an' if you're hard pushed, I can get along without drawin' anythin' for a year, for I've always kept a few hundred ahead against a time when I might break down entirely. I've told Mary how your wife's been in the store a great part of the time, an' there's nothin' that Mary'd like better than to do the same thing, if agreeable to you an' Mrs. Somerton. She's had practical trainin' at it, you know."

"She'll be worth her weight in gold to us," Philip replied, "for I foresee a busy future, about which I've much to say to you. The cyclone, instead of depressing the people, seems to have nerved them to new hope, for the town has received much free advertising; a lot of city newspapers sent men down here to describe the horrors of the affair, and as there were no actual horrors, and the men wanted something of which to make stories, that brother-in-law of yours, who is about as quick-witted a young chap as I ever met, filled their heads with the natural resources of Claybanks, — rich soil, drained swamps, plenty of valuable commercial timber, water-power available at short notice, whenever manufacturers might demand it, and, of course, the great deposit of brick clay from which the town got its name. I predict that there will be a lot of chances to make money outside of the store, so the more help we can have in the store, the better. By the way, I wonder what Truett has been up to this morning. I heard hammering awhile ago, in the direction of the warehouse. Ah! I remember — putting up

the old sign over the door — uncle's old sign; it was carried about a mile from town by the cyclone and brought back by a man who thought, and very correctly, that I'd like to preserve it. Let's go around a moment and see how it looks, and remind ourselves of old times."

As they reached the front of the warehouse, Caleb lost the end of a partly uttered sentence, for over the old sign he saw a long board on which was painted, in large, black letters: —

SOMERTON & WRIGHT,

SUCCESSORS TO

"Who did that?" Caleb gasped.

"Truett," Philip replied. "He did it by special request, and I'm afraid he worked a little on Sunday, but Mrs. Somerton and I thought it a work of necessity. You see," Philip continued, in a matter-of-fact manner, and ignoring Caleb's astonished look, "by the terms of Uncle Jethro's will I was to provide for you for life and to your own satisfaction, and 'tis quite as easy to do it this way as

on the salary basis. Besides, 'twill put those benevolent societies out of their misery, and put an end to their questions, every two or three months, as to the likelihood of the property reverting to them. You'll have me in your power as to terms, but I know you'll do nothing unfair. Let's have articles of co-partnership drawn up, on the basis of equal division of profits in the entire business — store, farms, houses, etc. I wrote you of the lump of money I got for my father's old mining stock. That, of course, is my own; but if the firm runs short of ready cash at any time I will lend to it at the legal rate of interest, so nothing but a very bad crop year can cripple us. Besides, I shall want to operate a little on the outside, so the store will need an additional manager who shall also be an owner — not a clerk, as you've insisted on being."

"But, Philip," said Caleb, who had collapsed on an empty box in front of the store, "I've never had any experience as a boss."

"Nor as a married man, either," Philip replied, "yet you've suddenly taken to the

part quite naturally and creditably! The main facts are these: I'm satisfied that the past success of the store business has been due quite as much to you as to Uncle Jethro, and all the people agree with me. I couldn't possibly get along without you, nor feel honest if I continued to take more than half of the proceeds. Why not go tell the story to your wife, as an eye-opener? I think it might give her a good appetite for breakfast, and improve her opinion of Claybanks and the general outlook. It might cheer her farther to be told that her brother is the right man in the right place, and bids fair to become the busiest man in the county."

"I'll tell her, an' I don't doubt that 'twill set her up amazingly. But, Philip — " here Caleb looked embarrassed, "you haven't — don't you think you could make out to say somethin' to me about her?"

"You dear old chap, — 'young chap' would be the proper expression, — where are your eyes, that you haven't seen me admiring her ever since you brought her to us yesterday morning? She's a beauty with a lot of soul,

and she's a wonderfully clever, charming woman besides, and I never saw a bride who seemed deeper in love. I can't ever thank you enough for finding such capital company for my wife. I expected to be impressed, for Grace has raved about her ever since you first wrote of meeting her, but Grace left much untold."

"I was afraid you might think she took up with me too easily," said Caleb; "but when, after we were married, I told her I never would forgive myself if I did not make her life very happy, she said she had no fears for the future, and that I mustn't think she took me only on my own say-so, for she'd had a lot of letters from your wife about me, all to the effect that I was the honestest, kindliest, most thoughtful, most unselfish man in the world, except you. Mary had great confidence in the judgment of your wife, whom she remembered as a very discreet young woman and a good judge of human nature. Her brother, too, unloaded on her a lot of complimentary things that he'd managed to pick up out here about me. Now, as a married man,

an' a good friend of mine, what do you honestly think of my future?"

"Nothing but what is good. You've still half of your life before you, and if you're really rid of malaria, and if that Confederate bullet will cease troubling you, you ought to tread on air and live on sunshine for the remainder of your days."

"Speakin' of bullets," said Caleb, tugging at one end of a double watch-chain, and extracting from his pocket something which resembled a battered button, "how's that, for the wicked ceasin' from troublin' an' the weary bein' at rest? For my first two or three days at sea I couldn't see any good in sea-sickness, except perhaps that it had a tendency to make a man willin' to die, an' even that view of it didn't appeal very strongly to me, circumstances bein' what they were. One day when I was racked almost to death, I felt an awful stitch in my side. I was weak an' scared enough to b'lieve almost anythin' awful, so I made up my mind that I must have broken a rib durin' my struggles with my interior department, an' that the free end of it was

tryin' to punch its way through to daylight. So I sent for the ship's surgeon, an' he, after fussin' over me two or three minutes, and doin' a little job of carvin', brought us face to face — I an' my old acquaintance from the South. I was so glad that I could 'a' hugged the Johnny Reb that fired that bullet, an' I never was seasick after that. But that's enough about me. Tell me somethin' about business. Do you think the cyclone has hurt you a lot, for the present?"

"It destroyed the store and its contents, and I don't expect to get any insurance, but I haven't lost any customers. On the other hand, some farmers are so sorry for me, I being the only merchant that was entirely cleaned out, that they are going to trade with us next year. Besides, much of our stock was old, and never would have sold at any price, while an entirely new stock is a great attraction to all classes of customers. We'll have a new store building up pretty soon, if Truett is as able as he thinks himself and as I think him. Let's go back to the wreck a moment; he generally has some men at work by sunrise, clearing away, so as

to get at the foundations and ascertain their condition."

Apparently the young engineer was amusing himself, for they found him hammering a brick into small bits and examining the fractured surfaces. As Philip and Caleb joined him, he said: —

"This is a mystery. How on earth do you suppose this kind of brick got into Claybanks?"

"Easiest way in the world," Caleb replied, "seein' 'twas made here. 'Tisn't a good color, but, gentlemen, I saw whole houses on some o' the best streets in New York made of brick of about this color. They were better shaped, an' fancy-laid, but —"

"Excuse me, Caleb," said Truett, excitedly, "but do you mean to say that this brick was made here, in Claybanks, of Claybanks clay?"

"That's the English of it," Caleb replied, "an' all the bricks of all the chimneys an' fireplaces in the town are of the same clay."

"Oh, no; they're red."

"Yes, but that's because of one of Jethro's smartnesses. Wonderful man, Jethro Somerton was. The way of it was this: a newcomer

here that wanted to put on some style, like he'd been used to in Pennsylvany, got your uncle to order enough red paint for him to cover a big new barn. Just 'fore the paint got here the barn was struck by lightnin', an' the new barn had to be of rough slabs, an' the man was glad enough to get 'em, too. Meanwhile Jethro was stuck with a big lot o' red paint, for nobody else felt forehanded enough to paint a barn. Jethro cogitated a spell, an' then he said quite frequent an' wherever he got a chance, that Claybanks was a sad, sombre-lookin' place; needed color, specially in winter, to make it look kind o' spruce-like. That set some few people to white-washin' their houses, an' when them that couldn't afford to do that much kind o' felt that some o' their neighbors were takin' the shine off of 'em, Jethro up an' said, 'Any man can afford to paint his chimney red, anyhow, an' a red chimney'll brighten up any house.' So, little by little at first, but afterwards all at a jump, he got rid o' that lot o' red paint, an' had to order more, an' in the course o' time it got to be the fashion, quite as much as wearin' hats out o' doors."

"That explains," said Truett, apparently relieved at mind, "why I've not noticed the brick before. I've seen two or three foundation walls, but I supposed, from their color, that they were merely mud-stained. Now let me give you two men a great secret, on condition that you let me in on the ground floor of the business end of it. Brick of this quality and color, properly moulded and baked, is worth about three times as much as ordinary red brick: I'll get the exact figures within a few days. I know that there is money in sending it to New York, from no matter what distance. Some of it is used even in indoor decoration."

"Whe — e — e — ew!" whistled Philip.

"Je — ru — salem!" ejaculated Caleb. "To think that the clay has been here all these years without anybody knowing its real value!"

"How could any one be expected to know about anything that existed in an out-of-the-way hole-in-the-ground like Claybanks?"

"Sh — not so loud!" said Philip. "Such talk in any Western town is worse than treason."

"'Tis reason, nevertheless. There might be

a vein of gold here, but how could the world ever learn of it? Who owns the clay banks? Can't we get an option on them?"

"They belong to the town, which charges a royalty of twenty-five cents per thousand bricks," said Caleb. "They've brought less than a hundred dollars, thus far."

"Oh, this is dreadful! — splendid, I mean! A brick-making outfit isn't expensive, and fuel with which to burn the bricks is cheap. Can't we three organize a company, right here, in our hats or pockets, and get the start of any and all others in the business? 'Twill cost us about two dollars per thousand, I suppose, to haul the bricks to the railway station, but even then there will be a lot of money in the business. If we could have a railway — pshaw, men — Claybanks *must* have a railway! I've selected several routes, in off-hand fashion, over the three miles of country between here and the nearest railway station; there would be absolutely no bridging to do, nor any grading worth mentioning, so the three miles could be built for thirty thousand dollars. Let's do it!"

"Truett," said Philip, impressively, "go slow — very slow, or you'll have inflammation of the brain. Worse still, I shall have it. Caleb may escape, for he has the native Westerner's serene self-confidence in his own town and section; but I'm a Claybanker by adoption merely. First, you open a mine of wealth before our eyes, in the claybanks. Then you tempt us to make bricks for rich New Yorkers and others. Then you offer us a railway for thirty thousand dollars, — more money, to be sure, than could be raised here in thirty years, — and you do all this before breakfast on Monday morning. Come into the house with us; I shall faint with excitement if I don't get a cup of coffee at once."

"Make light of it, if you like," said Truett, "but will you look at the brick-making figures, — cost of plant, manufacture, and freight, also the selling price, — if I can get them from trustworthy sources?"

"Indeed I will — our firm will; won't we, Caleb?"

"I've been wantin' for years to see such a lot of figures," said Caleb, placidly, "an' to see

the railroad figures we could touch. I've seen some of the other kind, once in a while."

"I hope too many cooks haven't spoiled the broth," said Mary, at the breakfast table, from behind a large breast-knot of roses. "I found in the garden what Grace pronounces a lot of weeds; but I've made a salad of them, and I shall feel greatly mortified if all of you don't enjoy it."

"We are prepared to expect almost anything delightful from what has been accounted worthless," said Philip, "after having listened to some of your brother's disclosures this morning. Eh, Caleb?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Caleb, with an "I-told-you-so" air. "I never doubted that a lot of good things would be developed at Claybanks, when the right person came along to develop 'em."

"Think of it, Mary!" said Truett. "You remember that magnificent house of old Billion's, on Madison Avenue — a house of yellowish brown brick? Well, the foundation of Somerton's old store is of just such brick, and

it was made here, years ago, of the clay for which the town was named."

Mary's eyes opened wide as she replied: —

"What a marvellous country! Why, Grace, one of our firm, at the old store, boasted of having a chimney breast of that same brick, as if it were something quite rare and costly."

"Why don't you build the new store of it, Phil?" Grace asked.

"That's a happy thought!" said Truett. "Now, Somerton, what do you say to my brickyard plan? Put up the first solid building in Claybanks — set the fashion. Think of how 'twould advertise your business and make your competitors look small by comparison."

"Very well. See how quickly it can be done, if at all, and then we will talk business. We must have the warehouse clear by the beginning of the pork-packing season, less than four months distant." Then he smiled provokingly, and continued, "Perhaps, however, it will be better to build the new store of wood, as already planned, so you can give most of your time to building a railroad, so that we may get our golden bricks, and other goods, to market."

"There's sense in that," said Truett, taking the remark seriously. "As to the road, you may rest assured that my figures are within the extreme cost."

"My dear boy," said Philip, "far be it from me to dispute an engineer's estimates; but for some years in New York I was clerk and correspondent for a firm of private bankers who dabbled in railways, and I assure you that they never found any that cost but ten thousand dollars per mile."

"Perhaps not, for most railways are built on credit — generally on speculation, and largely for the special benefit of the builders, but our road — "

"What are these men talking about?" Mary asked of Grace.

"A railway from Claybanks to the nearest station we now have," said Philip. "Women love imaginative creations, Truett, so tell them all about it."

"There is no imagination in this," Truett retorted, "but perhaps they will condescend to listen to facts. Most companies are obliged to average the cost of their lines over a great

stretch of territory. They have bridges and trestles to build, cuts to make, low ground to fill, and they must pay high prices, at portions of their line, for right of way, and they stock and bond their companies at ruinous rates to get the necessary money. As I've already said, none of the routes I have selected requires a single bridge, trestle, or filling, and the right of way, at the highest prices of farm land in this county, won't exceed a thousand dollars per mile."

"'Twon't cost a cent a mile," said Caleb. "Any farmer in these parts will give a railroad free right of way through his land, and say 'Thank you' for the privilege of doing it. If his house or barn is in the way, he will move it; he'll even let the line run over his well, and dig himself a new one, for the sake of having railroad trains for him and his family to stare at, for the trains kind o' bring farmers in touch with the big world of which they never see anything. If everything else can be arranged, you may safely count on me to coax right of way for the entire line."

"Score one for Truett!" said Philip; "proceed, Mr. Engineer."

"Thank you, and thanks to Caleb. The items of cost will be only road-bed, ties, and metal. A single track, with heavy rails, can be metalled out here for less than three thousand dollars per mile: that means nine thousand dollars for the three miles, and that should be the total cash outlay, for the road-bed and ties can be provided, by local enterprise, without money."

"Pardon my thick head," said Philip, "but how?"

"By organizing a stock company with shares so small that any farmer can subscribe, his subscription being payable in ties, which he can cut from his own woodland, or in labor with pick, shovel, horses, plough, scraper — whatever he and we can best use. Fix a valuation on ties, and on each class of labor, and pay in stock. 'Tis simply applying our drainage-ditch plan to a larger operation, though not very much larger, and one that will be attractive to a far greater number of men. Do this, and you merchants and other men of

money supply the cash to buy the metal, and I'll guarantee to have that road completed in time to haul to market your wheat, pork, corn, and other produce on any day of the coming winter, regardless of the weather. Caleb tells me that you merchants have often lost good chances of the market because the roads between here and the station were so soft or so rough that a loaded wagon couldn't get over them. There are tens of thousands of cords of firewood still standing here, on land that ought to be under cultivation, but the farmers have no incentive to cut it, for there is no market but this little town. The railroad would get it to market, and at good cash prices, and thus doubly benefit the farmers. I'm told that the water-power of the creek has been holding up the Claybanks heart for years; and I know that there are enough varieties of commercial timber here to occupy several mills a long time, but no one is going to haul machinery in, and his output away, over three miles of mud or frozen clods."

"True as Gospel — every word of it," said Caleb. "I've heard Jethro, an' Doc Taggess,

an' ev'ry other level-headed man in town say the same thing for years."

"I fully agree with them," said Philip, "but let's go back to figures a moment. I've heard nothing yet about the cost of locomotives, and other rolling stock — mere trifles, of course, — yet necessary."

"We should not be expected to supply them," Truett explained. "The road which ours will feed will be glad to supply them, as all roads do for short spurs on which anything is to be handled. It would be idiotic to buy rolling stock for a road which at first won't have enough business to justify one train a day. When there's anything to do, the old company will send down a short train from the nearest siding; the run wouldn't require fifteen minutes. You Eastern people who are accustomed to a thickly populated country, with many through trains daily, don't know anything about the business methods of the sparsely settled portions of the West, especially on spurs of a railway line."

"He's right about rolling stock," said Caleb. "Ten years ago the railroad company, over

yonder, told Jethro an' a committee that went from here to see 'em that if we'd build the spur, they'd do the rest. But they stood out for a solid road-bed, as good as their own, an' for heavy steel rails, like their own, for they said their rollin' stock was very heavy, and they wa'n't goin' to take the risk of accidents. The price of the rails knocked us."

"Naturally," said Truett, "for steel rails were four or six times as costly then as they are now."

"You've made me too excited to eat," said Philip, leaving the table, "and I'm afraid that the trouble will continue until this road is moved from the air to the ground. The main offices of the old company are only about a hundred miles away; suppose, Truett, that you and the most truly representative merchant of Claybanks — I mean Caleb — run up there? I'll look after the men at work on the store. Tell the president, or whoever is in authority, that we think of building a spur at once from here to their main track, see what they'll do, and persuade them to say it in black and white. If they talk favorably, we'll

hold a public meeting, and try to do something. Mrs. Wright, we owe you an apology. I assure you that business talk is not the rule at our breakfast table."

"I wish it were!" said Mary, who, with Grace, had listened excitedly until both women were radiant with enthusiasm. "I wish railways could be planned at breakfast every day — if my brother were to be the builder."

"Now, Mary," said Caleb, "perhaps you begin to understand the Western fever of which I've told you something from time to time."

"Understand it?" said Mary, dashing impulsively at her husband. "I already have it — madly! I'm willing to bid you good-by at once for your trip, though I haven't been married a week. My husband a possible railway director — and yours also, Grace! How do you feel?"

"Prouder than ever," Grace replied. "Just as you will feel, week by week, as the wife of a clever husband."

XXVI — THE RAILWAY

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TRUETT and Caleb were on their way before noon, but not until Truett had first packed several bricks and fragments of bricks, from the foundations of the old store, for shipment to New York, accompanied by a request for probable selling figures of brick of the same natural quality and properly made. He also wrote for an estimate of cost of a modest brick-making outfit.

The two men returned within forty-eight hours with a written promise from the trunk line company to lay the rails, if these and a proper road-bed were provided, and take stock in payment for the work; also to take a lease of the road, when completed, by guaranteeing a six per cent dividend on the stock, which was not to exceed thirty thousand dollars. The company also imparted the verbal reminder

that a six per cent stock, guaranteed by a sound company, would always be good security on which to borrow money from any bank between the Missouri River and the Atlantic Ocean.

"That being the case," said Philip, "I will subscribe all the cash necessary to purchase the rails, if the road-bed and ties can be provided according to Truett's plan."

"Don't, Philip!" said Caleb.

"Why not?"

"Because there's such a thing as bein' too big a man in a poor country, especially if you're a newcomer. Other merchants will become jealous of you, an' 'twill cause bad feelin' in many ways. Work public spirit for all it's worth; give ev'rybody a chance; then, if toward the end there shows up a deficiency, they'll be grateful to you for makin' it up. Do you want the earth? Quite likely; so remember what the Bible says, 'The meek shall inherit the earth,' by which I reckon it doesn't mean the small-spirited, but the men who don't set their feller-men agin 'em by pushin' themselves too far to the front. If

folks here don't know that you've a lot of money in the bank in New York, where's the sense of lettin' 'em know it?"

"Right — as usual, Caleb," said Philip, after some impatient pursing of his lips. "I begin to see, however, in this guaranteed stock — provided, of course, that the farmers subscribe as freely as Truett's plan will allow — a way of relieving the stringency of ready money in this county. We may be able to start a small bank here in the course of time, especially if any manufacturers can be attracted by the hard woods, the railway, and the water-power."

"That would realize one o' my oldest an' dearest dreams," said Caleb, "for 'twould put an end to the farmers' everlastin' grumblin' about how much worse off they are than the people who have banks nigh at hand. I don't expect 'em to be much better off — perhaps not any, for I've noticed that almost any man that can borrow will go on borrowin' an' spendin', wisely or otherwise, clean up to his limit, an' then want money just as much as he did at first; but I'd like our farmers to have the chance to learn it for 'emselves, for

I'm very tired of askin' 'em, for years, to take an honest man's word for it."

Before sunset Philip had called in person on his brother merchants, Doctor Taggess, the owner of the saw-mill, the county clerk, and the hotel-keeper, and invited them to meet at his warehouse-store that evening, immediately after the closing hour, for a private and confidential talk on a business subject of general interest to the community. Caleb went into the farming district and invited a flour miller and several of the more intelligent farmers to attend the meeting. At the appointed hour every one was present, the door was locked, Philip briefly outlined the railway scheme, told of the main line company's offer, and called upon Truett to detail his plan of construction.

The young engineer responded promptly with facts and figures, and made much of his proposed stock subscriptions to be paid for in labor and ties, and the farmers present declared it entirely feasible. Most of the merchants were frightened at the amount of cash that would be required for rails, etc., as almost all of it would have to be subscribed by them; but

Philip, backed by the consciousness of his own bank deposit in the East, assured them that through some Eastern acquaintances he could get merchants' short notes discounted for a large part of their subscriptions, and that the guaranteed stock could be sold or borrowed on as soon as issued; if the cutting and delivery of ties could begin at once, the road could be completed soon enough to get the autumn and winter produce to market almost as rapidly as it could be brought in.

At this stage of the proceedings the owner of the saw-mill promised to expedite matters by subscribing five hundred dollars' worth of stock, payable in ties at a fair price. The town's last railway excitement, several years before, had caused him to buy in a lot of small timber and saw it into ties, which had been dead stock ever since; he had even tried to sell them for firewood. Doctor Taggess thought so highly of the project that he said he would take a thousand dollars' worth of stock; he had very little ready money, but through family connections in the East he could raise the money by mortgaging his

home. The county clerk said he would take five hundred dollars' worth, the hotel-keeper promised to take a similar amount, and the flour miller asked to be "put down" for two hundred and fifty. By this time the merchants lifted up their hearts and pledged enough more to secure the purchase of the metal. It was then resolved that a public meeting should be held within a week, at the court-house, roofless though it still was, and all participators in the private consultation agreed to "boom" the enterprise in the meantime to the best of their ability.

The public meeting was as enthusiastic and successful as could have been desired. Caleb had already secured the right of way, as promised, and a statement of this fact, added to those narrated above and repeated at the meeting, elicited great applause. Truett announced the valuations, estimated after much consultation, of the various kinds of labor to be received in payment of stock; also, the price of ties, and the length, breadth, thickness, and general quality of the ties desired. As the required number of ties was apparently in

excess of the producing capacity of the local saw-mill and the farmers tributary to Claybanks, it was resolved that tie subscriptions should be solicited from the part of the county on the other side of the trunk line, and thus expand the blessings of stockholdership. Then a list of conditional subscriptions was opened, and it filled so rapidly, that before the meeting adjourned there appeared to be secured as much labor, money, and ties as would be needed; so a committee was appointed to organize the Claybanks Railway Company according to the laws of the state.

"Is it done — really done?" asked Grace and Mary, like two excitable schoolgirls, when Philip, Caleb, and Truett returned to the store, which was almost full of expectant farmers' wives.

"It is an accomplished fact — on paper," said Philip. "To that extent it is done."

"Your own work, you mean," said Truett. "Mine has merely begun."

"When do you really begin?" asked Mary of her brother.

"To-day — this instant," was the reply, "if

I can get a couple of well-grown boys to assist me, while I go over the route with an instrument and a lot of stakes."

Several farmers' wives at once offered the services of their own sons, and went in search of them, while two of the women, more "advanced" than the others, themselves volunteered to carry stakes, chains, etc., — anything to hurry that blessed railroad into existence. Fortunately the arrival of several boys made the services of these patriotic ladies unnecessary.

"The sooner I am able to avail myself of any labor that may offer, the sooner I shall be ready for some of the ties. Oh, those ties! I wonder how many farmers and their sons I shall have to instruct in hewing!" said Truett.

"I wouldn't waste any time in thought on that subject, if I were you," said Caleb; "for what our farmers don't know about hewin' would take you or any other man a long time to find out. How do you s'pose all the beams an' standin' timbers of all the houses an' barns built in this county was made in the days

before there were any saw-mills nearer than twenty miles? How do you s'pose some of the log houses here are so tight in the joints that they need no chinkin'? I've heard of some Eastern people bein' born with gold spoons in their mouths; well, it's just as true that hundreds of thousands of Westerners were born with axes in their hands. The axe was their only tool for years, an' they got handy enough with it to do 'most anythin', from buildin' a house to sharpenin' a lead-pencil!"

"Good for Caleb!" shouted a farmer's wife, and Truett made haste to say:—

"I apologize to the entire West, and will put my mind at ease about the ties."

The subject of conversation was changed by an irruption of farmers and citizens, who wished to talk more about the new railroad, and who rightly thought that the place where the engineer could be found was the most likely source of information. The questions were almost innumerable, and Truett, who was quite as excited as any of them, told all he knew about what certain specified spur roads

had done for farming and wooded districts no more promising than Claybanks; so the informal meeting became even more enthusiastic than the gathering at the court-house had been, for the farmers' wives added fuel to the flame. The spectacle impressed Grace deeply, well though she knew the people; for from most of the faces was banished, for the time being, the weary, resigned expression peculiar to a large portion of the farming population of the newer states. Caleb, too, long though he had known all the men and women in the throng, had his heart so entirely in his face that Grace whispered to Mary:—

"Do look at your husband! Did you ever see him look so handsome, until to-day?"

A strong, warm, nervous hand-clasp was the only reply for a moment; then Mary whispered:—

"All the men here are fine-looking!—their faces are so expressive! I've not noticed it until to-day. Where did Claybanks get such people?"

"Say all that to your husband, if you wish to fill his heart to overflowing," said Grace,

"and then, to please me, repeat it to Doctor Taggess, or tell both of them at once." To share in the enjoyment, she succeeded in getting Caleb and the Doctor close to her and Mary, and quoted to them: —

"'Listen, my children, and you shall hear' — now, Mary!"

"I don't wonder that you're impressed," the Doctor replied, when Mary's outburst concluded. His own eyes were gleaming, and Mary said afterward that his face was her ideal of a hero at the moment of victory.

"Now, Mrs. Somerton, can you again wonder, as you've wondered aloud to my wife and me, that I, whom you've kindly called a man of high quality, have been content to pass my adult years among these backwoods people? Do see their hearts and souls come into their faces! I know they are not always so, but we never heard of any one remaining all the while on the Mount of Transfiguration. It isn't the railway alone that they're thinking of, but of what it will mean to themselves and their hard-working wives, and to their children, — closer touch with the great world of

which they've read and wondered, better prices for their yield, which means more creature comforts at home, better educational facilities for their children, and less temptation for the children to escape from the farm to the city. They know that all this must be the work of time, but they've never before seen the beginning of it, so now they're building air-castles as rapidly as a lot of magicians in dream-land. I can't blame them, for I'm doing it myself, old and cautious though I am. They can wait for the end, so can I; for all of us, out here, have had long training in the art of waiting. At present the beginning is joy enough, for I can't imagine how any one about us could look happier."

The formal survey of the railway route began that afternoon, for the people would listen to no suggestions of delay. It was completed quickly, and that the company was not yet organized according to law did not prevent the immediate offer and acceptance of a large working force of men, boys, horses, etc., from the village itself. The young engineer was his own entire staff, and also

temporary secretary and accountant of the enterprise; but as it was his first great job, he enjoyed the irregularity of everything. From that time forward, for several months, the village stores ceased to be lounging places. Any villager or farmer with time to spare made his way to the line of the new road, and feasted his eyes, apparently never to fulness, on the promise of what was to be.

As the work progressed farther from the town, the farmers of the vicinity, with their families, would saunter toward the line on Sunday afternoons and linger for hours, talking of the good times that were coming, and some of them actually moved their houses as near to the track as possible, so that the inmates might be able to have the best possible view of the trains when they began to run. When the road-bed was made and the ties were placed, and the laying of the rails began, entire families picnicked for a day at a time beside the track, although the weather had become cold, merely to see a shabby locomotive push backward some platform cars loaded with rails, and to see the rails un-

loaded, and listen to the musical clamor of track-laying; for did not each detail of the work bring nearer to them the hope of Claybanks for a third of a century, — a completed railway?

Truett had been better than his word. He had promised to finish the work by Christmas, but the formal opening ceremonies took place on Thanksgiving Day; and more than half the people of the county took part in it. With an eye to business the principal stockholders — the Claybanks merchants — hired a passenger train for the day, and gave the natives free rides to and from the nearest station that had a siding and switch by which the train could be sent back. The station had not a great town to support it, — merely five thousand people, — but as the Claybankers roamed through the place and saw many houses finer than any house in Claybanks, several streets that were paved with wooden blocks and many that had sidewalks, saw the telegraph and telephone wires, and a bank, and a fire-engine house, and horse-troughs into which fresh water flowed steadily from pipes which

were part of a general service, their hearts were filled with the conviction that all these comforts and conveniences had come through the possession of a railway. Claybanks was in a fair way to become like unto that town, and they made haste, each after his kind, to rejoice. Then all of them who were farmers began to lay out, on their mental tablets, the appearance of their own farms as they would be when divided into building lots, and also to count the pleasing sums of money that would be paid by the purchasers of the lots, and also the many creature comforts which the money would buy.

The first freight car that left Claybanks for business purposes was loaded with yellowish brown brick for New York, and all Claybanks was present to wave hats, handkerchiefs, hands, and aprons, as it moved slowly off. Claybanks wheat had gone East in times past, so had Claybanks pork, and undoubtedly these products had entered into the physical constitution of New York to some extent, but they could not afterward be identified. Claybanks bricks, however, were very different. They would be seen by every one, and they

would make Claybanks literally a part of the metropolis itself.

The meaning of all this was felt by the people of all classes; even Pastor Grateway was so impressed by it that he preached a sermon from the text, "They shall speak with the enemy in the gates," and that there should be no doubt as to who "they" were, a brown brick was at each side of the pulpit for the sides of the open Bible to rest upon. The pastor, being a man of spiritual insight, did not neglect to enlarge upon the fact that the bricks themselves were originally clay — mere earth — that had been trampled underfoot for years, seemingly useless, until it had been conformed in shape and quality to the uses for which it had been designed from the foundation of the world, and that each brick was a reminder that the most insensate lump of human clay had in it the possibilities for which it had been created.

Nevertheless, the majority of the hearers only carried home with them the conviction that the Claybanks brick-yard must become one of the great things of the world — otherwise, why did the minister preach about it?

XXVII — CONCLUSION

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"*CALEB*," said Philip one evening, as the partners and their wives sat in the parlor of the Somerton home and enjoyed the leisure hour that came between store-closing and bed-time, "so much important business has been crowded into the past few months that some smaller ventures have almost escaped my mind. What ever came of that car-load of walnut stumps that I sent East last summer?"

"I couldn't have told you much about it if you'd asked me a day earlier," Caleb replied. "I turned it over to a man in the fine-woods business — a Grand Army comrade that I met at my old chum Jim's post. He said at the time that the stumps would undoubtedly pay expenses of diggin' and shipment, an' maybe a lot more, but 'twould depend entirely on the stumps themselves. He'd have each of 'em

sawed lengthwise an' a surface section dressed, to show the markings of the grain o' the wood. It seems that they were so water-soaked that 'twas months after sawin' before the wood of any of 'em was dry enough to dress, but he got at some of 'em a few weeks ago, an' though most of 'em wa'n't above the ordinary, there were two or three that made the furniture an' decoration men bid against each other at a lively rate. One of 'em panned out over sixty dollars."

"What? One walnut stump? Sixty dollars?"

"Oh, that's nothing. To work me up, he told me of one, picked up in the country a few years ago, that brought more than a thousand dollars to the buyer. The markings were so fine that it was sawn into thin veneers that were sold for more than their weight in silver. Still, to come to the point, your entire lot brought about two hundred and seventy dollars net, an' I've got the check in my pocket to prove it."

"And the land from which they were taken cost me only two hundred dollars in goods!

And there are still hundreds of stumps in it! And I felt so ashamed and babyish when I learned that I'd been tricked into buying cleared land, that I almost resolved to recall you by wire, so that I should be kept from being tricked again in some similar manner! I shall have to drive out to old Weefer's farm, tell him the story, and ask him if he has any more walnut clearings for sale."

"Hadn't you better keep quiet about it? Where's the use in killin' the goose that lays the golden egg? Pick up all the walnut clearin's that are for sale, an' make what you can out of 'em, before you go to talkin'; but if you feel that you must say somethin' on the subject to somebody, an' jubilate a little, go tell Doc Taggess, who owns the lot you thought you were buyin'. If anybody deserves to make money in the boom that's comin', Doc does, an' if he could clear his land, now that he can railroad the logs to market, an' then get out his stumps, he might get cash enough ahead to pick up a lot of real estate, or take stock in millin' enterprises, when the water-power ditch is made, an' so lay up somethin' to keep him

out of the poor-house in old age; for as long as he can practise, he'll give to the poor all that he can collect from patients that are better off. The chap that handled the stumps for you asked me a lot of questions about the kind an' quantity of standin' timber out here, and said he didn't see why we didn't start mills to turn out furniture lumber an' dimension-stuff, like some that have made fortunes for men in the backwoods of Indiana and Michigan an' some other states."

"Let's try it, if our cash and credit aren't already used as far as they should be. By the way, how is Claybanks corn-flour, Somerton's brand, going in England?"

"Fairly. We've sent, in all, about four hundred barrels; that's an average of a hundred a month, with a net profit to us of about thirty per cent, which is better, I reckon, than any of the big flour shippers ever dreamed o' makin'. I've been hopin' that the good tidin's of good food-stuff at about half the price o' bad would work its way into other parts of London an' out into the country, too; but English people don't seem to move about an' swap

stories an' prices, like us Americans. I reckon I came home too soon, for the good o' that deal, for I had a lot o' things in mind to do in London to make corn-meal popular. It seems to be the English way to let things alone until some of the upper classes take to 'em, so I was goin' to try the meal on some o' the swells; but the more I thought of it, the more it seemed that they too belonged to the follow-my-leader class. So I made up my mind to begin way up at the tip-top, an' so I wrote a letter to Queen Victoria, sayin' I'd come all the way from America to make the English people practically acquainted with the cheapest and most nutritious food known in the temperate zone, an' that I was catchin' on fairly, but the common people seemed to think it was common stuff, which it wasn't, as I would be glad to prove to her. Besides, I knew of Americans richer than any nobleman in England who had it on their tables every day. I said I could make six kinds o' bread an' three kinds o' puddin' out o' corn-meal, an' I'd like a chance to do it some day for her own table; if she'd let me do it in the palace kitchen, I'd bring my

own pans an' things, so's not to put the help to any trouble, — an' I'd — "

"You — wrote — to — the Queen — of England," Philip exclaimed, "offering to make corn-bread and meal-pudding for the royal table!"

"That's what I did, an' I took pains to specify that 'twould be made of Claybanks corn-flour, Somerton's brand, too — not the common meal that again an' again has let down American corn in foreign minds to the level of the hog-trough. But it didn't work. Though I put in an addressed postal card for reply, the good lady never answered my letter. Too busy, I s'pose."

Philip stared at Grace, who pressed one hand closely to her lips, while Mary looked at her husband as if wondering in what entirely original and unexpected manner, and where, he might next break out. Then Philip said gravely: —

"How strange! Besides, I doubt whether any other man was ever so thoughtful as to enclose a reply-card to her Majesty."

"Well, after waitin' a spell I made up my

mind that that particular cake was all dough. One day when I was in the shop, turnin' sample cakes an' bread out o' the pans, up drove a carriage, an' a couple o' well-dressed men, one of 'em short an' stout, an' the other kind o' tallish, came in an' looked about, kind o' cur'us. 'Try some samples, gentlemen?' said I, thinkin' they looked as if they was used enough to good feedin' to know it when they saw it. They nodded, stiffish-like, an' I set 'em down to a little table with a white cloth on it, an' I set before 'em dodgers, an' muffins, an' cracklin' bread, an' pan-cakes, all as hot as red pepper, an' some A 1 English butter to try 'em with — an' they do know how to make butter over in England!

"Well, they sampled 'em all, takin' two or three mouthfuls of each, an' exchanged opinions, which seemed to be favorable, with their eyes an' heads. While they were eatin', the shop began to get dark, an' when I looked around to see if a fog had come up all of a-sudden, as it sometimes does over there, I saw that the street was packed with people, an' they were jammed up to the doors an'

windows. 'It's plain that gentlemen are not often on exhibition in this part of the town,' said I to myself. Suddenly the two got up, an' both said 'Thanks,' an' went out, an' when their carriage started, the crowd set up a cheer. 'Who are they?' I said to a man at the door. He looked at me as if I had tried to run a counterfeit on him, an' he said, 'Ah, me eye!' but another chap said:—

"'It's the Prince, an' the Duke o' Somethinorother.'"

"H'm! Yet you never got a reply on that postal card!"

"Never. I meant to try again, an' register the letter, so as to be sure that it got into the right hands, but somethin' kept tellin' me 'twas time to get back home. But if you'll let me make a trip again next fall, at my own expense, I'll try for better luck. Anyway, I'll work the corn-meal plan on Liverpool an' other cities, an' if it takes as well as it's done in London, 'twon't be long before a good many thousan's of bushels of Claybanks corn'll be saved from the distilleries, in the course of a year."

"Phil," Grace remarked, "Caleb's wish to go abroad in the fall reminds me that I want you to take me East for a few weeks in the spring, and we ought to begin our preparations at once. As 'tis near Christmas, Mary and I have been talking of presents, and particularly of one which you and Caleb can join in giving us and at the same time secure to yourselves more of the business and social companionship of your wives. We want a housekeeper."

"Sensible women!" Philip replied. "As to your husbands, they will be delighted — eh, Caleb? If it weren't that servants can't be had in this part of the country, and help, after the Claybanks manner, would have banished all sense of privacy, I should think myself a villain of deepest dye for having allowed the wife of the principal merchant of Claybanks to cook my meals and do all the remaining work of the house, and I don't doubt that Caleb feels similarly about Mary."

"Well," said Caleb, "work that wa'n't degradin' to my dear mother oughtn't to seem too mean for my wife; but, on the other hand, my

mother shouldn't have done it if I could have helped it, 'specially if she'd have tried also to do a full day's clerk-work in a store once in ev'ry twenty-four hours."

"That explains our position," Grace added. "You two men are so full of new business of various kinds that Mary and I should be in the store all the while. Soon that dreadful pork-house must open for the season, and then we shall see less of you than ever. A good housekeeper will cost no more than a good clerk, and we must have one or the other. We don't want a clerk, if we can avoid it; at present we have the business entirely in our own hands, and when there are no customers in the store, we have as much privacy and freedom as if we were in the house. Mary knows a good woman in New York who will be glad to come here as maid-of-all-work, if she may be called housekeeper instead of servant; she has a grown son who wishes to be a farmer and to begin where land is cheaper and richer than it is in the vicinity of New York. With such a woman to care for the house we can spend most of our time in the store, hold the trade of such women-

folk as deal with us, and try to get the remainder; for where women and their daughters buy, the husband and brothers will also go."

"That's as sure as shootin'," said Caleb. "Do you know that in spite of the cyclone the store has done twice as much business since you came as it ever did before in the same months? I'd be downright sorry for the other merchants in town if I didn't believe that we're soon goin' to have a big increase of population, and there'll be business enough for all. Philip deserves credit for a lot of the new business, an' his wife for more, which isn't Philip's fault, but his fortune in havin' married just that sort of woman. If nobody else'll say it, I s'pose it won't be presumin' for me to say that a small percentage of the increase o' the last two or three months has come through a young woman whose name used to be Mary Truett."

"Small percentage, indeed!" Grace exclaimed. "Mary has secured more new business than I did in the same number of weeks, and she has done it so easily, too. She never seems to be thinking of business when she's talking to a customer, yet she instinctively

knows what each woman wants, and places the proper goods before her, while I, very likely, would be thinking more of the woman than of the business."

"That's merely a result of experience," said Mary. "I'm nearly thirty, with a business experience of ten years; you were a mere chit of twenty-three when you married. Still, I don't believe any hired clerk, of no matter how many years' experience, could do half as well as either of us."

"For the very good reason," said Philip, "that both of you are practically owners of the business. No clerk can be as useful in any business as one of the proprietors."

"That remark would 'a' hurt my feelin's, a year ago," said Caleb; "but since my name went on that sign over the door, I've been lookin' backward at my old self a lot, an' lookin' down on my old self, too. Perhaps the difference has come o' gettin' rid o' malaria, perhaps o' takin' a wife; but I'm goin' to make b'lieve, after makin' full allowance for ev'rythin' else, that nobody can bring out the best that's in him until he begins to work for himself."

"No other person would dare criticise your old self in my presence, Caleb," said Philip, "but you've certainly acquired a new manner in business, and it's extremely fetching in more senses than one. One of the best things about it is that the natives notice it, and talk of it to one another, and are pleased by it, for you're one of them, you know. I'm a mere outsider."

"Do they really notice it?" asked Caleb, with a suggestion of the old-time pathos in his face and voice, "an' are they really pleased? Because, as you say, I'm really one of 'em, an' I'm proud of it. I've gone through pretty much ev'rythin' they have — 'specially the malaria, an' now that their good times are comin', I'm glad I'm with 'em. But to think —" here he walked deliberately to a mirror and studied his own face for a moment — "to think that only so little time ago as when you came here I felt like an old, used-up man, an' I'd put my house in order, so to speak, against the time when I should have my last tussle with malaria, an' go under, with the hope o' goin' upward."

"That was before you met Mary," Grace suggested.

"Yes; that's so."

"And he must get rid of Mary before he can ever have an opportunity to feel that way again," said the lady referred to, as she looked proudly at her husband. "Old! Used up! The most spirited, active, hopeful, cheerful man I ever met! But, really, you were different, Caleb, when I first saw you; it doesn't seem possible that you're the same man. From what I've seen of the people here, I believe it is one of the ways of the West for men to try to look older than they are; you must use your influence — and example — to make them stop it. In New York a man seldom looks old until he is very near the grave; the most active and fine-looking business men are beyond threescore, as a rule — about twenty years older than you, Caleb."

"Ye — es, but they weren't brought up on malaria, pork, plough-handles, an' saleratus biscuit," said Caleb. "There's hope for a change here, though. Doc Taggess says there's nothin' like as much malaria in town as there was before the swamps were drained, and the good times comin', because o' the railroad, 'll make

some more changes for the better, for all of us."

For a few moments each member of the quartet seemed to have dropped into revery. The silence was broken by Philip, who said: —

"Caleb, a year ago even you would not have dared to prophesy the changes that have been made, and those which are within sight, yet to you belongs the credit for all of them."

"To me? Well, I've heard and seen so many amazin' calculations in the past three months that I'm prepared to stand up under almost anythin', but I'd like to know how you figure it out that I've done anythin' in particular."

"'Tis easily told. If you hadn't fallen in love with Miss Truett, and she with you, her brother wouldn't have come out here, and the malaria wouldn't have been drained from the swamps, and the railway wouldn't have been projected, and the farmers wouldn't have become owners of guaranteed stocks, which has put new life into many of them, and there'd have been no inducement for manufacturers

to use our water-power and our hard woods, and no bank would have been possible, nor any of the public improvements, — paving, water service, and others that will soon be under way. Don't you see?"

"Ye — es, as far as you've gone, but I wouldn't have known there was such a person as Mary — bless her! — if you hadn't sent me East, an' your wife — bless her too — hadn't given me a letter of introduction to Mary, so I don't see but that honors are about even. You might as well go back a little further, though, and say that you wouldn't have been here to send me East if your Uncle Jethro hadn't loved your father, an' made up his mind that your father's son shouldn't fool away his life in pleasin' his eyes an' fancies in New York, but should get the disciplinin' that makes a man out of a youngster that's got the real stuff born in him."

"Caleb, what are you saying?"

"Exactly what your Uncle Jethro said to me — an' to nobody else. Mebbe I hadn't ought to have let it out; mebbe, on the other hand, it may make you feel kindlier to your

Uncle Jethro. But, to go on backward, there wouldn't have been any Jethro to lay up a business start for you if the Somerton family hadn't begun somewhere back in the history of the world, an' when you get that far back you might as well go farther an' say that if Noah hadn't built the ark, or if he'd been in too big a hurry to get out of it, there wouldn't have been any of us to do anythin'. I tell you, Philip, an' just you keep it in mind against anythin' that may turn up anywhere or at any time, that when there's any glory or credit to be given out, an' you want to do the square thing, you'll have to spread it so thin that nobody'll get enough of it to make him feel over an' above cocky."

People, like nations, usually become happy in prosperity, but through prosperity their lives become less eventful, and consequently less interesting to other people. The water-power of Claybanks' "crik" was soon developed, and the mills that were erected, and the people who came to them, made new demands and prices for real estate, as well as for cer-

tain farm products. But before all this had come to pass Grace made haste to gratify a consuming desire to spend the springtime at her birthplace in the East. While she was there, Caleb one day received the following despatch from Philip: —

"Caleb Wright Somerton born last night. May he become as good a man as you."

Caleb showed the despatch to his wife, and then started to put it between the leaves of his Bible; but Mary made haste to put it in a frame, under glass, and affix it to the front of the store, to the great interest of the people of Claybanks and vicinity and to the great benefit of the business of Somerton & Wright.

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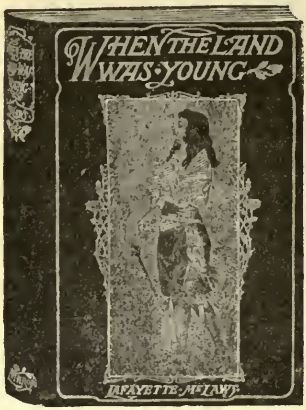

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